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Jheronimus
Bosch
and
Pieter Bruegel
the Elder

Art as History

Stephen Graham Hitchens

History as Art

Assembling
knowledge
not
setting
puzzles

BREPOLS

Art as History, History as Art

*Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder
assembling knowledge not setting puzzles*

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Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Art as History, History as Art

*Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder
assembling knowledge not setting puzzles*

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Nijmegen Art Historical Studies

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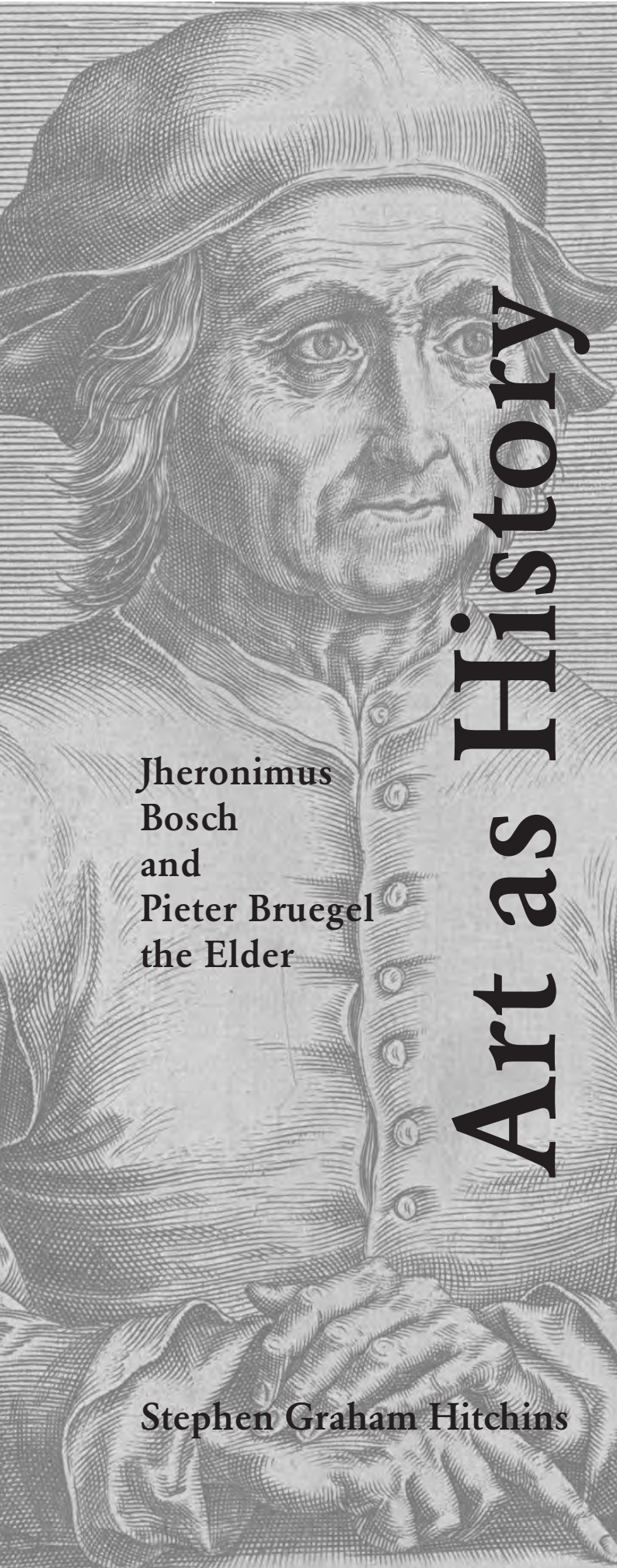
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Nijmegen Art Historical Studies XXI

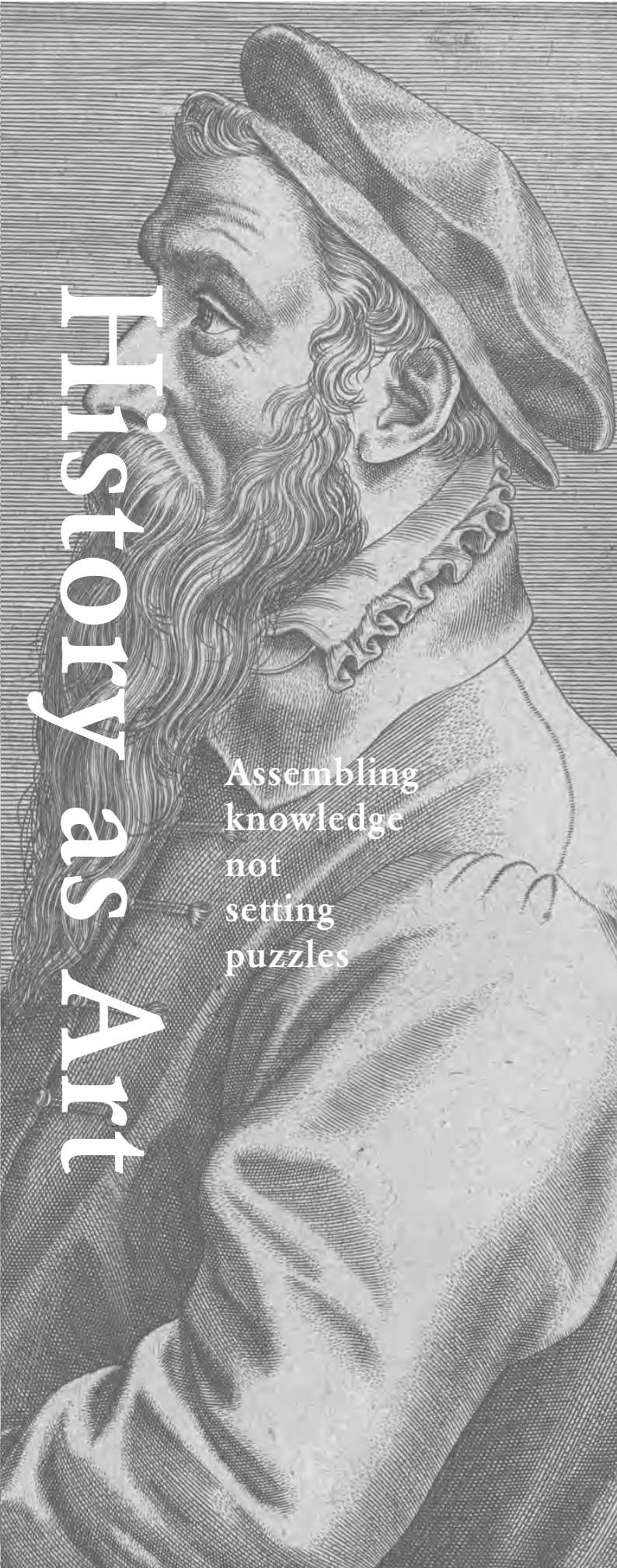
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Jheronimus
Bosch
and
Pieter Bruegel
the Elder

Stephen Graham Hitchins



History as Art

Assembling
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For Ela, Alex and Ben

and in memory of Bernard Denvir, Walter Horn, and my father
“the latches of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose” Mark 1:7

Bernard Denvir was not only a friend to me at a time in my life when I most needed one, he was a distinguished and incisive art critic and editor, historian and writer. A man of great charm and generosity, his conversation was always full of wit and humour. He wore his learning lightly, his eye for art was true, and he did not make mistakes of judgement in the contemporary jungle. The AICA Memorial Award is named after him, and as its website correctly states: “His view was that art criticism should reflect a wide cultural knowledge and be expressed in clear, simple and interesting language”. And as a lecturer, he did not simply tell students the facts needed to know to pass the exam. He took you on a journey around the world. I hope that I have not let you down, Bernard.

Walter Horn died within a year of Bernard, in 1995. He was the first art historian in the University of California and was responsible for establishing the History of Art department at Berkeley. From the recovery of Charlemagne's ceremonial regalia in 1946 when he served in a special intelligence unit charged with locating works of art seized by the Nazis and restoring them to their rightful owners, to his magnificent three volume Plan of St Gall, Walter was a top man, a wonderful companion, gregarious, urbane and a cherished memory. Meeting in Switzerland was one of the highlights of my life. Your sommelier raises a glass.

My father died in 2010 while I was writing this book. He had read through an early draft. A wonderful man for whom only absolute standards mattered and comparative standards were irrelevant, he pushed me gently all his life. As he went ‘gently into that good night’, certain in his beliefs, idealism undimmed, radicalism unfettered, soft blue eyes blazing, I thought of what this book would mean to him, the boy who despite being top of his school for four years and destined for great things, left at 15 to support a family without work in the 1930s. A man of few regrets, no bitterness, great humility, unending courtesy, he taught me that life was about more than self-interest, work about more than self-advancement, service about more than self-service, and happiness about more than what you earn and own. He taught me the fundamental values of taking responsibility, doing one's duty, being honest and looking out for others. For him that was the right way, the only way. What more could anyone ask?

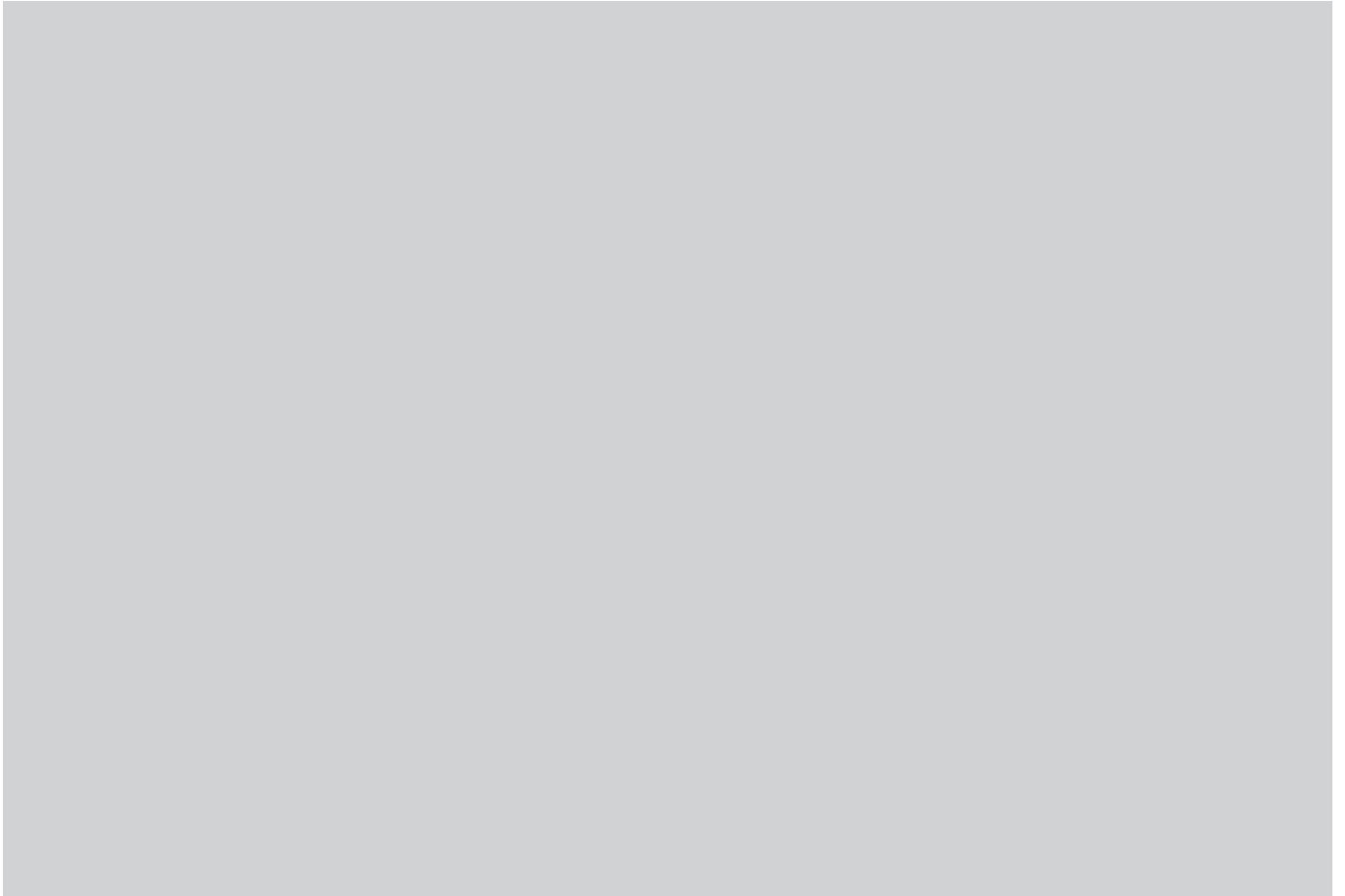
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Art as History - History as Art



1 Jan Chlebik *Venice* 2009

Prologue – my point of departure

“I hope that I may be excused for entering on these personal details, as I give them to show that I have not been hasty in coming to a decision” Charles Darwin¹

I came to art history one Saturday morning in 1964 at the Tate Gallery in London. I was 15, and I went in a small party organised by my school art master to see the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. The Arts Council catalogue claimed that the exhibition was “the only one in Europe which has a systematic historical basis”.² This outing was followed up a few months later in 1965 by a visit to a retrospective of the work of Giacometti. I had already seen four of his pieces in the Guggenheim Collection. I was transfixed. At the time doubtless most of what I learned was undermined by my ignorance, but it was the starting point. I was excited as I had never been before.

I had never been out of Britain. The Guggenheim had come from Venice, a dream of a place, mysterious, romantic, an experience rather than a city, that until then was represented for me by sludgicoloured paintings of *Santa Maria della Salute* by not very talented practitioners in library books and the windows of art shops. But after those Saturday morning excursions in 1964-5 what Venice meant to me was an art collection that embraced all the major movements since 1910, a collection that had its home in a place where the world met. A place “unique among the nations, half eastern, half western, half land, half sea, poised between Rome and Byzantium, between Christianity and Islam, one foot in Europe, the other paddling in the pearls of Asia”.³

A place that had always captured the imagination of the world had now caught mine. Maybe “the idea of Venice was irreconcilable with the modern world”.⁴ Yet I was to discover the self-styled *Serenissima* through the world of modern art with repeated visits to the Biennale, the place where the art world met. The Biennale had been responsible for the Guggenheim first coming to Europe and it was the Biennale that always drew me back. It has intoxicated me every time I go there.

And here, the art of my century was joined to the art of the past.

At the Doge’s Palace were some paintings by Bosch. For my birthday in 1967 I had asked for a copy of Charles de Tolnay’s 1937 classic *Hieronymus Bosch* that had just appeared in English. Inexplicably and wonderfully, considering the cost, I received it. Without realising it, two channels of artistic interest had opened for me almost simultaneously. Yoking them together was a love of history, whose message I was brought up to remember – adapt or perish.

Some of the lessons it has taught me are in this book.⁵

1 Charles Darwin *The Origin of Species* from page 1 of the facsimile edition, published in 1964 by Harvard

2 Arts Council *The Peggy Guggenheim Collection* 1964 p7 Herbert Read preface

3 James Morris *Venice* 1960 p23

4 James Morris *Venice* 1983 p10

5 I admit that I have come to this rather late but then, I am with Einstein when he wrote “It’s not that I am so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer”.

Aims, hypothesis and questions

“Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists” Marcel Proust

My hypothesis is that both Bosch and Bruegel were assembling knowledge rather than setting puzzles. To understand better why they painted as they did this is an “attempt to see things as those involved see things”.⁶ This may be considered a “speculative adventure, an imaginative preconception of what might be true”⁷ but I believe that the social and political motivation for the images they produced can be shown to “identify and explain relevant relationships between the facts”.⁸

Both artists demonstrate social, economic and political resonances in paintings that are numbingly familiar yet still poorly understood. There is social, religious, and political motivation in their art, an art that is frequently described in art historical isolation. Wealthy, intelligent, and closely associated with an educated upper-middle class milieu, Bosch was not dependent on patrons. He could choose to undertake the commissions that suited him, or were of particular interest to him, or simply the people for whom he wished to work. By the time of Bruegel the times were more dangerous and the ‘second Bosch’ made the acute political and religious strife the hidden subject of much of his work.

This is not to say that the work of Bosch and Bruegel are mimetic exercises, direct records of the world around them, specific representations, but they do both capture something of the power and poetry of their times. They both visually manipulate the wealth of associations we make with their era by recording the driving forces of the world around them.

The historical framework that is essential for an understanding of any period of art history is a prerequisite for an examination of Netherlandish art from 1450 to 1550. Christian art and the resultant use and abuse of religious imagery had become a problem. Art increasingly became a visual commentary on the times and on political, social and religious change, instrumental in formulating ideas and issues at the same time as it led to a transformation of religious imagery.

For Bosch the image was a morality play about the paucity of good in a world teeming with evil monsters. For Bruegel it was frequently a reference to political events.

Far from producing puzzle pictures I believe that they were assembling knowledge as part of a visual culture that was central to the life of society. It was more than “a popular news map” as Svetlana Alpers refers to it in reference to a later century. It relates to the knowledge of the world at a particular time and two artists’ experiences of it. It stretches from the sexuality and spirituality of Bosch to secular satisfaction in Bruegel at a time of social upheaval and a great turning point of world history – the beginning of the modern world and the end of the Middle Ages.

Scope and method of inquiry

In order to limit the scope of the study I have concentrated principally on the background to *The Last Judgement*, *The Tribulations of St Antony* and *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Bosch and *The Fall the Rebel Angels*, *The Conversion of Saul*, *The Triumph of Death*, *The Procession to Calvary* and *The Massacre of the Innocents* by Bruegel. I have made a critical study of the existing literature on the artists, to identify and explain the relevant relationships between the known facts, to build and substantiate a theoretical structure that will show both artists were indeed assembling knowledge, indicate the missing links in the information available and to investigate them.

In the process, I will also suggest a number of working hypotheses rather than definitive conclusions that I trust will be compelling, or at least stimulate discussion: that in all probability (in spite of the generally accepted view to the contrary), Bosch visited Italy; that against apparent evidence to the contrary Bruegel (as likely as not) did not in fact go to Italy; that misinterpretations of Bosch paintings have led to the artist being considered a pessimist when he may well have indicated through his work the exact opposite; consider the dispute that Bosch was in fact a composite figure and even 'his' signature work produced by at least two hands if not more; that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* has always been misinterpreted, and that the cycle of the *Seasons* by Bruegel can be completed on the basis of extant works.⁹

This will take us into the strange and complex world of probability, the mathematics of which were first considered in Bruegel's lifetime by Gerolamo Cardano, the Renaissance physician, mathematician and friend of Leonardo da Vinci.¹⁰ A heavy gambler, Cardano was interested in working out the odds on throwing dice. He wanted to discover some logic behind his potential success rate. As with everything else in the age of Bosch and Bruegel, the mathematics of a roll of the dice had religious connotations.¹¹ Now, probability theory reaches into every area of the modern world. I think it can help us with limiting some of the possibilities surrounding Bosch and Bruegel.

And as to those religious connotations: faith is the defeat of probability by the power of possibility. All great human achievements in art as well as science come through people who ignore the probable and have faith in what is possible. The more we learn the more we understand how little we understand. "The impact of the highly improbable might be a rallying cry to always ignore experts but it relates to our misunderstanding of the likelihood of surprises" – the tricks history uses to keep us alert.¹²

Une problématique

The balance of probability? In the absence of proof one can only keep an open mind, be prepared to consider the inconceivable, attempt to mediate between different points of view, set down the facts that are known and explain why one has drawn the conclusions one has. There is no absolute proof of many of the facts about these two artists. Bias, prejudice and selective judgement colour many assessments, the litmus test of historical accuracy ignored, enthusiasm frequently overwhelming even-handedness in writing about them. Robert Storr has written that “art history is not a science based on proof, nor even a philosophical edifice built upon strict, incontrovertible logic; it is a myth-making system bedevilled by often inconvenient material, social, political, and biographical facts, a system whose ultimate purpose is, or should be, less to explain the past or predict the future of art than to aid viewers in grasping the complexity and experiencing the aura – that is, the unique temporal, spatial, and phenomenological particulars – of unique works of art to which they, as individuals and in groups, are directly exposed”.¹³

I agree.

Overall, I have tried to frame things around an intellectual problem or paradox rather than around a gap in knowledge. I think there are some gaps that I can address in the course of writing this, but the overall question is *une problématique* – a non-obvious puzzle for which I believe I can formulate an interesting and effective answer. I plan to set my answer within a framework that will show its intellectual significance. That framework is history.

As Galbraith has phrased it, there is conventional wisdom “ideas which are esteemed at any time for their acceptability... and predictability” – something I am well aware of in relation to Bosch and Bruegel.¹⁴ There are also plenty of insurgent critical views, minority positions that some might consider hair-brained ideas, together with what I have seen called ‘legacy views’ about these two artists, older positions largely displaced by conventional wisdom that still attract some support.

My instincts are interdisciplinary. I realise that I am not alone or unique in this. For me, history and history of art is the same thing. “Art history... is by its very name interdisciplinary between the internal history of art itself and the role of art as history” – something I shall come back to at the end of this book.¹⁵ If they are to be understood, the rich and complex lives and work of Bosch and Bruegel have to be studied in the context of their age, an age when the power of art could shake and shape the destiny of peoples. Describing the spirit of the age frames my arguments. Thus I believe I have arrived at what Gombrich calls a “principle of intersection” when a number of factors fit together in a plausible, complete and precise way, to provide a persuasive interpretation and comprehensive explanation of what we are looking at.¹⁶

Gladus domini super terram

Most of what this book is about has been thoroughly worked over before by art historians in the last century. Its originality lies I believe in the selection, arrangement and presentation of the facts that are set against a comprehensive range of topics comprising the chronological grid; the political, religious, social, military, geographic, scientific, economic and artistic framework spanning one of the fault lines of history, from the fatalistic Middle Ages with its air of immobility about life in general, to the revolutionary new world with its renaissance of nearly everything.

So much modern research tends towards a compulsion to know more and more about less and less.¹⁷ I have tried to set the work of Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder in a wider perspective, a narrative of their times that describes the surface of history, a comprehensive documentary about the age in which they lived. There is a danger in writing history backwards and imparting present-day values to past situations and, in turn, bringing to

an assessment of 15th and 16th century Netherlands, a corrosive cynicism that does scant justice to its complexities. Nowhere is this complexity more evident than in relation to the family and society. By assembling a number of what Fernand Braudel calls “parahistoric languages” – demographics, agriculture, food and diet, costume, technology, prices and money, trade routes, travel, hygiene, illness, table manners, etc., – items that are usually developed in the margins of history and setting them within a wider historical narrative, I hope to demonstrate that both Bosch and Bruegel were painting the spirit of their age.

I will try to bring these elements together and demonstrate that it is the great gulf that exists between their time and ours that has led both to a lack of understanding of their art and to so many inventive theories that have been put forward to explain their pictures. It is necessary to swim against the current of time and look at what locked the world of Bosch into immobility that is hard to explain considering the speed at which fantastic changes were to follow, set off by an extraordinary historical moment that has been called “the blast furnace in which the modern world was formed”, the Reformation during the lifetime of Bruegel.

Snapshots of the way people live can point out the contrasts and disparities between one society and another. The population of Europe at the time of the birth of Bosch was around 45 million people. By the time of Bruegel’s death it was pushing 100 million, one of the fastest rises in its history. I cannot claim to depict all material life but in attempting to set the scene for the age, from food to furniture, from techniques to towns, I think I can produce an argument that demonstrates my theory.

It may seem like sweeping the dust of history, but it is the raw material of art.

The lives of these two artists cross a passage of time from the medieval to the modern world that has been viewed differently as time has passed. Were the Middle Ages the time between Christ’s first and second coming or an interval between the decline of antiquity and the revival of classical culture? Did Bruegel and his contemporaries realise they were living in a new world order where medieval backwardness was a thing of the past or did their world still seem as barbaric, parochial and bigoted as they might have viewed the lifetime of Bosch? How did the challenge to organised Christianity, the unifying element of the medieval world, impact upon the physical, social and intellectual immobility of the time? How was change viewed at the time, did anyone notice, was it exciting or terrifying? Were any of the changes reflected in the work of Bosch and Bruegel?

Does their work represent the spirit of the age or not? I have always thought, and still believe, that to comprehend what Bosch and Bruegel were painting, it is essential to have the social, political, and religious, context. Without it, the audience is left flailing around in a visual sea without any navigational aid. If you have no knowledge of the geography of the political map and the dynasties that controlled it, you will be lost; if you do not understand what drove Luther, you will not appreciate Bruegel; if you have not read Dante or fully comprehend the Black Death or the late 15th century witch craze you will not get Bosch; if you have no concept of the medieval Church then you will fail to understand either of them.

To paint Hell, *Gladius domini super terram*, you must know you walk on a thin crust. As Robert Hughes noted, Savonarola’s motto would serve for Bosch and Bruegel.¹⁸ Both artists certainly painted evil and misery. We should not be surprised. They were witness to the horrors of the age, man’s inhumanity to man, the persecution, grotesque social inequalities, religious wars and warrior princes, and the imminent arrival of the last battle between good and evil, enough to collapse any faith in humanism and disrupt any order that an artist attempted to put on a panel or canvas. They connected art with history; they painted what they saw.

The shape of the book

The book is divided into nine chapters. As I do not believe in art historical isolation, two of those chapters concentrate on the historical background. Interspersed throughout are a number of personal interludes, *entr'actes* between the main scenes. These are reflections on events and artists in our own time that echo some of the things in Bosch and Bruegel, whose work echoes with contemporary resonance. They are included to bring some present day perspective to the difficulty of comprehending what it was like to be alive in their day, how to understand what drove them and help the reader to become involved in the works.¹⁹ Their times may be very different to our own, but in chronicling the events and art of today I have found the ghosts of the past ever more present.

In *The Shape of the Pocket* by John Berger I found an essay “Against the Great Defeat of the World” from 1998/9 in which he uses art as a lens through which his thoughts about art and politics are brought into a kind of focus. He begins with *The Triumph of Death* by Bruegel and, like me, unsurprisingly brings in extermination camps. (I realised the strengths of Berger’s words as I explored my subject, and you will find this refrain throughout.) The world in which we live and act today can be understood, he later proposes, through the depiction of Hell in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* that he refers to as “the Millennium Triptych” in the Prado: “a strange prophecy of the mental climate imposed on the world at the end of our century by globalization and the new economic order”.

Like Bosch’s *Hell*, our world is one in which “there are no pauses, no paths, no pattern, no past and no future. There is only the clamour of the disparate, fragmentary present”. And later, intriguingly “The act of resistance means not only refusing to accept the absurdity of the world-picture offered us, but denouncing it. And when hell is denounced from within, it ceases to be hell”. The critic, Arthur Danto, noted all this in a review of the Berger book: “. . . the charm of Berger’s art criticism lies exactly there, in his looking at artworks with a view to finding meanings in them that bear on our lives.”

Along the way I will also present a few contentious ideas – my six suggestions listed above, not simply to spice it up or cause controversy, but simply to show how conventional wisdom may be easily challenged, and to demonstrate that I have original thoughts, and will not simply accept the status quo. As James Boswell noted of the playwright Oliver Goldsmith: “When Goldsmith began to write, he determined to commit to paper nothing but what was new; but he afterwards found that what was new was generally false, and from time to time was no longer solicitous about novelty.”²⁰ In searching for a fresh perspective and interpretation of the evidence I am ‘solicitous about novelty’ whilst still reflecting Goldsmith’s reluctance in search of novelty as an aim in itself.

Four themes

There are four aspects to this book. This is not a journey that follows a straight line. These artists did not paint in straight lines, nor is the religious story they illustrated. The themes are threads in an argument, separate, overlapping, complementary and conflicting, they support and struggle against each other, reflect and have the potential to confuse. Together they illuminate each other and bring a perspective to their age.

1 Period inner vision – a paradise imagined

“Those who are willing to be vulnerable move among the mysteries” Theodore Roethke

The question here is, can one ascribe to the artist-viewer relationship the phenomenon that Heisenberg, working in atomic physics, characterised as the uncertainty principle: namely that through the process of observation, the observer alters the outcome? It is the ability of Bosch and Bruegel to incorporate personal experience into their work, to transform and to transcend it, which “constructs its wonderful parapet over the abyss of [their] disquietude and apprehension”.²¹ Their very different worlds were both brimful of apprehension. Old certainties fell away to be replaced by nothing but questions. In the dramatic visual terms in which they both painted they mapped out their own terrain. I am setting out to comprehend their territory, the end of the Middle Ages in the Low Countries. Their pictures are not all direct transcriptions of experience but the dramatic significance that lurks within a single arrested moment, a story, an event, a memory – and the impact they had on the inner territory of their audience, the consuming meditative aspects of their work that ranged from inner vision to inner conflict. Proust wrote of ‘involuntary memory’: the idea that a fragment of experience could suddenly overtake one or, conjured up from the depth of one’s consciousness, could convey the quality of the past. Jacob Burckhardt wrote that history is the record of facts which one age finds memorable in another. And Frances Yates wrote in her study on the art of memory about how the Greeks’ elaborate memory systems, inherited and recorded by the Romans, passed into the European tradition to be revived during the Renaissance as part of the occult, illuminating the relationship between scientific method and attempts at mastering the universe by magical means.

However ambiguous the relationship between memory and history,²² the work of Bosch and Bruegel might be described as eccentric historical exercises in counter memory. Many of the facts about the lives of Bosch and Bruegel are challenged, nevertheless; however you look at the period from around 1475 to 1568, these two visually defined their eras as very few other artists have ever done. This approach might be challenged by among others, David Hockney, who is rather dismissive of art historians’ interest in iconography and social context, choosing to focus on how artists chose to make images rather than what inspired them.²³

I disagree.

In the case of Bosch and Bruegel, their incisive eyes captured and made their era memorable. Thus to fully understand their pictures, one has to understand the era and understand the audience. Who then were these artists, their names used as epithets to conjure up either a Bruegelian peasant or Boschian devilry? What is it that has so captured the universal visual consciousness that has put an imprint on our collective imagination, ‘painted the photographs of our dreams’? Who are these mysterious figures that have spawned their own adjectives? As one can but marvel at how potent their art remains, like some spiritual and artistic Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the moment you try to consider their most profound subject, man and woman’s helplessness in the face of their own true character, you change its very nature.

2 Religion – a paradise lost

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” John 8:32

Christianity is another country. We have to familiarize ourselves with it to understand the meaning of these pictures. As much as we may be living in a progressively secular and pluralist society (Pope Benedict XVI called it ‘aggressively secular’), these artists worked at a time when western civilisation was fundamentally Christian. The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one and the same to them. To look at these pictures is to visit that world. And it can take some understanding. Belief is very different today because society is different. Authority is viewed differently. Hence, for many, to seek belief is to search for a feeling of evidence. And looking at these artists is rather like a quest to explain the obvious through the obscure.

This was not an age of religious tolerance.²⁴ In art galleries around the world the Renaissance is getting a renaissance, a makeover that brushes away the reality of life at the time. But “it is hard to think of any period in history (except our own) in which one could have looked about and seen more savage cruelties, more grotesque social inequities and a denser landscape of hysteria than in northern Europe, its pogroms and religious wars, its screeching flagellants and deranged messiahs proclaiming the imminent arrival of Armageddon.”²⁵ We have said farewell to the religious certainties of that past. Now, “the false certainties of evangelical Christianity are as arid as the shrill negativism of the materialist outlook” making consideration of Bosch and Bruegel like a visit to another world at a time when the literal truth of every word of scripture was unquestioned.²⁶

At the end of the Middle Ages, to paint was to pray twice.²⁷ Bosch and Bruegel certainly did. By painting, they became instruments of God. For Bosch, the Christian condition is that of a vagabond and a beggar, one who is with Job in the ‘distress of the soul’. Bosch was to paint like the saint of all outsiders,²⁸ Bruegel reflecting the belief that “God’s eyes see what ours cannot.”²⁹ Today, Bruegel’s pictures challenge us more than those of his predecessor. His remarkable versatility suggests that his true faith lay in the power of his own brush.

Christ on the Cross was the sacrificial bridge between time and eternity. An unambiguous, unrepeatable event, He died once, for all, the ultimate sacrifice, that as ritual mixed mythical and historical time every day, in public, at the altar. The revelation of God’s goodness in Christ was a response to the existence of evil. As Augustine put it, “God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist”. One of the best guides in these matters, the impact of this fifth century north African bishop was immense. He saw evil as a disorder in a good creation; it did not exist in its own right, but was a direct consequence of our misuse of human freedom. Augustine argued that evil was the result of human beings attempting to become something they are not, little gods with the power to give and take away the lives of others. Both Bosch and Bruegel did battle with little gods, but whereas the work of Bosch is a personal search for the face of the Lord, and Bruegel searches for meaning by developing a theological artistic aetiology, they both mine the gospels in the cultural context of their age, biblical exegesis as it was practised in the pre-modern era.

3 Politics – a paradise postponed

“For Bosch, religion is politics and politics is religion” Justin Lewis-Anthony³⁰

The Low Countries produce more history than they can consume.³¹ They may also have produced more history than we can digest. The politics that concern me here at the end of the Middle Ages and the birth of the modern era, are religious. “Whether or not we regard Jesus as a deity, he was at the very least a political leader.”³² It was a time when politics and religion were hopelessly muddled. Christian history has been punctuated by a succession of dramatic arguments: ‘how Jewish the infant church should be, the nature of God and Christ, the meaning of one word in the creed, the rows between Augustine and Pelagius about human will and God’s grace, and those battles of the Reformation fought between Catholicism and various forms of Protestantism, where people believed so strongly in the rightness of their position that they were prepared to torture and burn their opponents to prove it; a whole series of arguments basically between those who want to conserve and preserve the way things have been in the past and those who want a radically different future. Again and again, people stood on the line between what is no longer appropriate, and what has not yet been invented. The world of the past no longer quite works, the world of the future is not quite clear, and the more uncertain mankind is, the more passionately we express our views.’³³ As an American senator reputedly answered a question with regards his views on an issue, “Son I haven’t made up my mind but when I do I’ll feel mighty strongly about it.”

Bosch and Bruegel straddle the most violent of those lines, one forever looking back as he contemplates annihilation, the other pushing hard for the line but always holding back in his final attempt to cross it. Yet they both convey the whole Christian story, its challenges and its comforts, as they set out to portray life’s pilgrimage and the destination of travel; paintings of death that are an invitation to life, paintings that appreciate how difficult taking up that invitation can be, and how in challenging the viewer to comprehend their meaning requires undertaking the task of being human.

Both artists also explore the nature of power, the politics of which, for example, Bosch arranged medieval society as Christ’s tormentors in the *Crowning of Thorns* – rulers, churchmen, merchants and peasants.³⁴ Then Bruegel’s message to deluded, repressive autocrats everywhere, their need to discover that you cannot shoot down an idea forever, however incapable they may be to show restraint when brutal escalatory over-reaction would do. Hence the rage engendered at the thought of a newly born child usurping a ruler’s power in the *Holy Innocents* mirrors the massacre of so many men and boys and other innocents during the Balkan war.³⁵ His paintings penetrated the past to focus a spotlight on the present, and thereby created a universal image. A life inspired, Bruegel inspires others.

An imaginative response is a spiritual exercise, a creative effort to see and understand what is at the heart of something. As Daniel said of God, “He reveals deep and hidden things, and knows what lies in darkness”.³⁶ The heart is where all the important battles occur – but it sometimes requires the imagination to report back from the frontline. In their very different ways, these two artists saw themselves on the frontline, warriors for Christ.

4 Landscape – a paradise regained

“Nature therefore is nothing else but God’s instrument” Richard Hooker³⁷

“In van Mander’s view, Bruegel becomes the consummate bridge between the two strands of Netherlandish art, its *imitatio* of nature and its *imitatio* of the mind and emotions of man.”³⁸ If he was a link, it was because he finally stepped out of the shadow of Bosch where he worked for so long at the behest of Hieronymus Cock, the ultimate art entrepreneur of his day with his print business and publishing house, *Aux Quatre Vents*, producing art for the market as the bourgeoisie joined the cultural elite. That shadow had the gravitational field of an enormous dark star hovering above half of Bruegel’s career. If Bosch was a man with a shadow, for so long Bruegel was the shadow without the man. Once he escaped his predecessor’s shadow he worked furiously until the end of his short life.

Bruegel’s use of landscape is both one of his greatest innovations and something that defies easy interpretation. Separated from iconographic tradition, he gave us a contemporary and palpable vision of the natural world. My view is that his landscapes were to be read as much for their epistemological value, as for their potential for facilitating our knowledge about his time.

The pilgrimage of life was once again about to be a journey into the unknown, a journey that starts naturally with tentative steps, would launch him with a mixture of fear and wonder, terrified what might go wrong, thrilled at all that might be discovered, praying for courage to take those first steps, yet trusting that if he faltered, God would rescue him. Bruegel was undecided, his steps were certainly tentative. Like *The Wayfarer* by Bosch, he reminds us that Jesus had told them straight, ‘no-one who starts following me and then looks back is ready for where I am going’.³⁹ Tough words. But in the new world of seemingly infinite choices, Bruegel still needed the courage to make tough decisions and know that he would remain steadfast for a lifetime. The early optimism had not abated, however repressive the response. Nevertheless, everyone is tempted to look back over their shoulder, to think what might have been, ask for the courage to walk forward to an uncertain future, and to be faithful for the life-time of that journey.

Friedländer suggested that in Bruegel’s landscapes “the land dominates the more limitlessly in that the people on it display no dignity in the face of almighty nature, neither the spiritual majesty of the saint nor the physical majesty of the Renaissance”, man’s position in the world being slight and insignificant. “He gives to the landscape what he takes away from man.”⁴⁰

This points to Bruegel’s painted religious episodes as minor occurrences in the great sweep of nature. However, they can be read as allegories where landscape and humanity are one, the power of nature symbolic of the power of God. A saint’s conversion dwarfed by the mountains, innocents murdered in a panorama of horror and wintry beauty, two faceless figures trudging off into the wasteland with their baby son in an attempt to escape infanticide, a suicide ignored by two armies overwhelmed by mountain landscapes, the grim features of seasonal life overpowered by nature, a man with his Cross seemingly a side event, a whole body of work where the main characters are isolated, their actions dwarfed by their environments, perseverance the only option.

The best we can do with hostile nature is to cope with it. In Bruegel’s world, apathy is endemic, sacrifice may be meaningless, nature is overpowering, humanity is inconsequential, hence we are forced to confront our own universal indifference. His alternative is to head for oblivion.



2 Thomas Hoepker *USA. Brooklyn, New York. September 11, 2001* ©Magnum*

* W H Auden suggested that the *The Fall of Icarus* was ignored by an indifferent world *Musée des Beaux Arts* 1938 "... how everything turns away / Quite leisurely from the disaster". In the painting a ploughman goes on his way while a boy falls to his death in the sea. (The painting, neither signed nor dated was always a disputed work by Bruegel. Following research by The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels in partnership with the University of Liège it has been shown to be an early copy made after 1600. See Christina Currie & Dominique Allart *The Bruegel(H)el Phenomenon* 2012.) Fast forward to 11 September 2001, Thomas Hoepker, a Magnum photographer, took a picture of New Yorkers apparently relaxing, enjoying the sunshine in a park in Brooklyn, while across the water, against an azure sky, plumes of smoke and dust rose above lower Manhattan. The picture was not published

for five years but when it was, immediately caused controversy. Photographed without permission, the questions came thick and fast: were the young people callous and uncaring or, as they later claimed, in a state of shock and disbelief? Had they moved on from the carnage already to simply take pleasure in the day? Were they misrepresented? Whose morality should we question: the photographer's or the photographed? Art in the midst of mass slaughter, a crime beyond imagining, how do we judge? It is a picture about memory, and about history; it captured the truth of a moment. Life does not stop because of a cataclysm. Move on, change channels, start again. Memories quickly fade – "... how everything turns away / Quite leisurely from the disaster". As the picture reminded us, and as I shall argue, history is not a heroic story.

The Art of Meaning

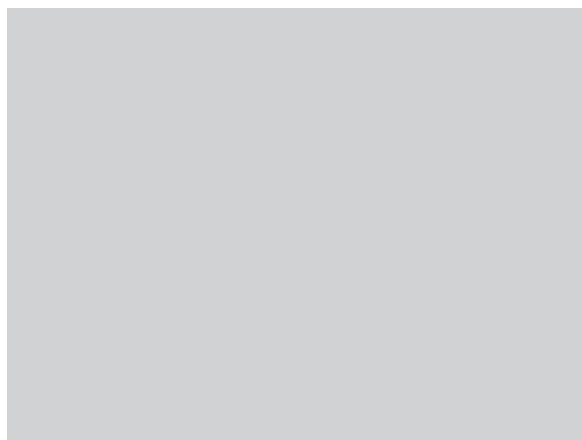
"I write half the poem. The reader writes the other half." Paul Valéry

What exactly is the meaning of the work of Bosch and Bruegel is one of art history's blood sports. The academic contest to unravel these two has never abated. Studying the history of art is a little like walking into a movie that has already begun. You start by not knowing what has already happened and, as you try to find your way in the dark, it is inevitable that you are going to stand on someone's toes, or at least get in their way. Sometimes people curse you, but generally they just 'tut tut', sigh loudly and move their legs and coats to let you pass by. Mostly, they try to pretend that you are not there at all. Asking a question of the person next to you can result in anything from a full plot and cast list to a complete rebuff. So it goes. We may disturb the audience.

For art to have meaning it needs an audience. Meaning lies in the relationship between the artwork and the observer. The only reason there is a connection between the two is the cultural understanding the audience brings to the work. The meaning of the work to the artist may be completely different, and the meaning in any connection to a later generation is something different again. It is the shared cultural heritage that the original audience has with the artist that holds the key. When we say we like something but cannot articulate what it is we like, it is because the artistic expression is culturally received, understood and appreciated even if we, the audience does not fully understand what is happening to us. It is an emotional response such as may equally occur in the theatre or the concert hall. We just do it. A nebulous concept, one that feels intangible, yet in reality it can be captured: it is called success.

The success of the artist in delivering meaning waxes and wanes over time, audiences change, each new one brings something to the work that may resonate with the viewer in a different way depending on the degree to which they share the experiences and cultural heritage of the artist. It is a transaction between the maker and the viewer, an offer accepted or rejected. The imperatives that drive our understanding of the world, and the richer appreciation we may have of a work of art, come from that culture, but as history is lived forwards yet is written in retrospect we may know the result before we consider the beginning, and can never wholly recapture what it was to know the beginning only.

Art history is an attempt to do just that, for those who acted out this drama did not know, nor do any of us yet know, the end.



3 Room 56A, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

- 6 Martyn Denscombe *The Good Research Guide* 1998 p69
- 7 Peter Medawar *The Hope of Progress* 1972 p22
- 8 GK Verma and RM Beard *What is Educational Research? Perspectives on Techniques of Research* 1981 p10
- 9 "If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it". Albert Einstein (Quoted by Des MacHale *Wisdom* London 2002)
- 10 Cardano's book about games of chance, *Liber de ludo aleae*, written in the 1560s but published after his death in 1663, contained the first systematic treatment of probability – as well as a section on effective methods of cheating.
- 11 One improbability is that the man who invented probability theory, Blaise Pascal, gave up mathematics at the age of 30 to devote the rest of his life to the exploration of religious faith – something he was prepared to bet on: "Belief is a wise wager. Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth and it proves false? If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you will lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that He exists."
- 12 Nassim Nicholas Taleb *The Black Swan*: the impact of the highly improbable 2007 p2
- 13 Robert Storr 'La Famille Cézanne' Philadelphia Museum of Art *Cézanne and Beyond* exhibition catalogue 2009 p43
- 14 JK Galbraith *The Affluent Society* pp18-20
- 15 Larry Silver *Later Netherlandish Art (and Scholarship)* address to the HNA <http://www.hnaneews.org/2005/silver.htm>
- 16 EH Gombrich *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* 1974 p12
- 17 Hugh Trevor-Roper: "Today most professional historians 'specialise'. They choose a period, sometimes a very brief period, and within that period they strive, in desperate competition with ever-expanding evidence, to know all the facts. Thus armed, they can comfortably shoot down any amateurs who blunder or rivals who stray into their heavily fortified field; and, of course, knowing the strength of modern defensive weapons, they themselves keep prudently within their frontiers. Theirs is a static world. They have a self-contained economy, a Maginot Line and large reserves which they seldom use; but they have no philosophy. For historical philosophy is incompatible with such narrow frontiers. It must apply to humanity in any period. To test it, a historian must dare to travel abroad, even in hostile country; to express it he must be ready to write essays on subjects on which he may be ill-equipped to write books." Foreword to *Historical Essays* 1957. In an echo of Lord Acton he concluded "the interest of history lies not in its periods but in its problems".
- 18 Robert Hughes *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* 1968 p278
- 19 To paraphrase the photographer Robert Capa who is reputed to have told his competitors, "if the photograph is not good enough, you're not close enough", I would humbly suggest that if the contemporary resonance that I find echoing throughout the work of Bosch or Bruegel is not evident, then perhaps, dear reader, you have not looked closely enough.
- 20 James Prior *The Life of Oliver Goldsmith* 1837 vol2 p476
- 21 The quotation is Richard Ellmann's, commenting on Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 22 John R. Gillis *The Journal of Modern History* 68/2 June 1996 pp 427-429 reviewing Patrick H. Hutton *History as an Art of Memory*
- 23 David Hockney *Secret Knowledge* 2006 p200
- 24 Benjamin J Kaplan *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* 2007 ("a textual Brueghel" according to Ronnie Hsia of Penn State) portrays religious life in the Holy Roman Empire, showing there was greater toleration in the 16th century than after the wars of religion ended a century later. Kaplan includes an account of the *schuilkerken*, clandestine Catholic churches (maintained behind the façade of a house) in the Netherlands; and of *Simultaneum* the sharing of churches (Protestants worshipping in the nave, Catholics in the choir space around the altar) by different denominations in Biberach and Augsburg. Kaplan maintains that contrary to what many believed, religious toleration declined from around 1550 (pp198-203)
- 25 Robert Hughes *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* 1968 p278
- 26 AN Wilson 'Tennyson's In Memoriam: a farewell to religious certainty' *Guardian* 5 January 2011
- 27 a paraphrase of St Augustine – "those who sing pray twice"
- 28 Simone Weil, mystic, intellectual, assembly line worker, resistance fighter, teacher of philosophy and Greek, or revolutionary anarchist according to your point of view, wrote a parable about people caught up in the beauty of the world. They enter a labyrinth away from their friends. Once they reach the centre of the labyrinth God devours them, after which they are reduced to standing at the entrance and beckoning the others in. André Gide called Weil the saint of all outsiders. It is a term that would serve for Bosch.
- 29 John Updike 'The Thing Itself' *Due Considerations* 2007 p596, originally *The New York Review of Books*
- 30 Justin Lewis-Anthony *Circles of Thorns: Hieronymus Bosch and Being Human* 2008 p6
- 31 The phrase 'more history than they can consume' was used in reference to the Balkans by Winston Churchill.
- 32 Mark Wallinger speaking in Venice in 2001 about his own *Ecce Homo*.
- 33 Bishop Tom Butler speaking on BBC Radio 31 May 2011
- 34 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns)* National Gallery, London
- 35 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Massacre of the Innocents* The Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace
- 36 Daniel 2:22 "He revealeth deep and hidden things, and knoweth what is in darkness: and light is with him" also Job 12:22 "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of death". Note that throughout, biblical quotations are taken from The Holy Bible Douay-Rheims Version. Translated from Greek and other languages into Latin by St Jerome c382AD, the Latin Vulgate Bible quickly became the Bible universally used in the Latin Rite, and was declared by the Church to be the only authentic and official version in 1546. First published in English by the English College at Rheims in 1582AD (New Testament) and the English College at Douai in 1609AD (Old Testament) the whole Douay-Rheims was revised and checked against the Latin Vulgate by Bishop Richard Challoner in 1749-1752AD. The original predates the more poetic but less precise translation of the King James Version, frequently used in books written in English about both Bosch and Bruegel. With reference to the Council of Trent, in 1943 Pius XII stated that the Vulgate is "free from any error whatsoever in matters of faith and morals" in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Be that as it may, the Douay-Rheims is a faithful word-for-word translation and is the nearest we can get to an English version of the Catholic Bible used in the period covered here. Sometimes referred to as the 'most reliable English-language Bible' because it is based on St Jerome's version of no longer available 'captured' and 'frozen' texts, it is an exact translation which means that in places it can seem a little strange and unintelligible.
- 37 Richard Hooker *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* 1594
- 38 Mark A Meadow *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs and the Practice of Rhetoric* p119
- 39 Luke 9:62 "Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" to put one's hand to a plough being a proverbial expression that signifies undertaking any work, one has to look forward, be intent on the work in hand, and not to look back in regret. Religion is everything or nothing. If you are not willing to sacrifice everything for God, then you are really willing to sacrifice nothing. Luke 9 is full of drama: Jesus sends forth his apostles to preach, feeds 5000 with five loaves, is transfigured, and casts out a devil. It is at the end, in reply to a man who announces he will follow the Lord "but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house" when Jesus makes his comment about not looking back. Ministry is not a job-share. (See chapter 1 for discussion of *The Wayfarer* or *The Pedlar-cum-Everyman-Pilgrim* by Bosch.)
- 40 Max J Friedländer *From Van Eyck to Bruegel* edited and annotated Fritz Grossmann, trnsd Marguerite Kay 1956 p141

1

Incisive eyes – a paradise imagined

Thresholds

All art has to start somewhere

Period inner visions

Pilgrimages

More than meets the eye

The ‘third eye’ of the artist

Redemptions

A laissez-passer to the afterlife?

From inner vision to inner conflict

From a figure of Christ to the Christ Child

Two medieval artists at the dawn of the Renaissance

4 Cornelis Cort *Jheronimus Bosch* c1560-655 Hendrik Hondius *Jheronimus Bosch* 16106,7 Pieter Bruegel the Elder attributed to Johannes Wierix, from the 1572 *Pictorum* and the 1610 *Hondius Pictorum* by Hendrik Hondius

Thresholds

All art has to start somewhere

“... I had to concede the difficulty of presenting a fixed image of character as much as of societies and of passions” Marcel Proust *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*

“Unfulfilled dreams don’t go away, and the dreams of art are especially persistent, because art is always bringing up its past, even when it doesn’t know what to do with it” Tom Lubbock

ALL ART has to start somewhere. So does art history. “Before one studies history one should study the historians.”¹ In a book on the intellectual origins of art history, there is an introductory reference to Arnold Hauser’s comment that “the modern art historian is all too often cast in the ironic mode of saying that an artist is conditioned historically and psychologically, by the times in which he or she creates, while the art historian always manages to present his or her position as remaining ‘outside time’. The fact is [that the] art historian also is confined within limits set by the artistic aims of his time; his concepts of form and categories of value are bound up with the modes of seeing and the criteria of taste of a certain age.”² The author goes on to point out that Panofsky wrote that “a successful content exegesis not only benefits a ‘historical understanding’ of a work of art but also... enriches and clarifies the viewer’s aesthetic experience.”³

Essential as it is to analyse content, the context in which it was assembled is just as important: “The art of the past must not be interpreted as if it had been created today. Instead of asking ‘how do these works affect me, the modern man? And estimating their expressional [sic] content by that standard, the historian must realise what choice of formal possibilities the epoch had at its disposal. An essentially different interpretation will then result.”⁴

Both Bosch and Bruegel were very much of their time. They lived in a world of conflict, change and discovery. It was a world where Carnival fought with Lent every day. The reality of their surroundings was the source of their imaginary worlds, a reality rich in life’s dramas and impermanence. They created an artistic kaleidoscope of their age, a century that began with the absolute belief that the world was about to end only to emerge at the beginning of a new period in history, the world on the eve of European expansion, scientific advance and religious revolution. They seized on all the visual and sensory flashbulbs that were going off around them and invested them with dramatic significance.

Often as not, art begins with direct observation or individual recollection and reflection. Yet it is the moment when imagination outstrips experience and memory that produces a universal metaphor. The genius of both Bosch and Bruegel was to apprehend the universal meaning that lies within particular moments, something that distinguishes great artists from the mere recorders of events, and transforms those memories into spectacle.

“In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption.”⁵ It may be redemption from punishment, atoning for an offence, an act of freeing, delivering, restoring or reclaiming, but for Bosch and Bruegel it was an expression of humanity’s deliverance from sin and damnation. Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder: who were these two faceless men?

A man without a face shares a common misfortune with a man without a memory: a total lack of identity. Someone without identity is uncertain as to his past and his present, and will be unable to say where he is going in the future. He will be unaware of his own capabilities, and only time or experience will reveal his personality. Those who are careless of their identities are either faceless or amnesiacs. Do we know what these two looked like? Why should it matter? Would it help to know? There are some clues, and inevitably, different opinions about them. Elusive as they are, they emerge occasionally from the romanticized vagueness that surrounds

them into contours as original as their names.⁶

Bosch is like a character actor, the perfect combination of ubiquity and anonymity, his influence has been enormous and yet we have very little idea as to his identity. Some think that they have identified him in some of his paintings, but he remains ethereal, out of reach.⁷ “Once seen, never remembered.”⁸ There is one drawing, possibly based on a self-portrait from around 1510, and we all try to read between its lines.⁹ We long to leap the fence of privacy, to know better the person on the other side and “find the mind’s construction in the face”¹⁰ Apart from which we have a symbolic portrait of his artistic self.¹¹ Having taken the name of his city as his own – he adopted the toponym ‘Bosch’ sometime after 1500.¹² *The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ears* shows an autobiographical single blasted tree signifying the woods (bos) with an owl of the night in a hollow, a bird that in medieval bestiaries gave itself up to the darkness of sin.¹³ Symbolic of doom and death, even as an incarnation of the Devil and signifying temptation and deceit, a whole parliament of various species of owl populates the work of Bosch.¹⁴ This owl is one of the most significant: the sin is inside the man.¹⁵

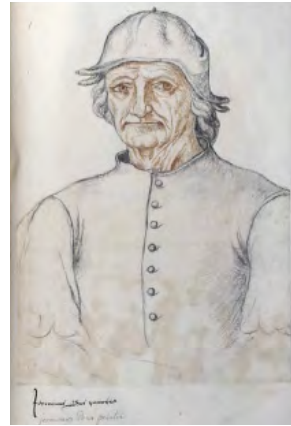
“Turn your attention upon yourself and beware of judging the deeds of other men, for in judging others a man labours vainly, often makes mistakes, and easily sins; whereas, judging and taking stock of himself he does something that is always profitable” Thomas à Kempis

No man is an island – unless he happened to be Jheronimus Bosch. At home in the company of saints and angels, his images are haunted by his own secret worlds, and doubtless those of his collectors. They are paintings for and of a private sphere. One that delivers enough torture to leave one feeling dirty like a specialist category of misery porn, their tales tap into the most sordid corners of the mind or repel to the point of resistance, as edifying intentions descend to voyeurism.

Arresting as they are, as you stand and look at them you start to think about absent places, where these paintings were intended to hang. The ideas, associations, affinities, memories and longings that they signify come from experience of the material world, and speak to their commissioners about the next. Their authority of transfigured landscapes, and tortured lives are, like the hermit saints Bosch revered, a voice in the wilderness that tell of a life no longer guaranteed – for him, or anyone else. His work possesses an integrity, force and dignity that can only serve a moral purpose, one that was grounded in the spiritual world of 15th century Netherlandish art. Yet in their wisdom and empathy, and in their understanding of the supreme importance of the love of God, they are self-portraits of a strong man whose knowledge of the human soul in all its suffering is indeed a body of profound and exceptional work.

Bosch is never quite what you think. That bos had a further medieval significance. One of the greatest first lines in the history of poetry – Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno* “Midway upon the road of our life / I found myself within a dark wood...”¹⁶ then challenges its readers with a hardline moral absolutism that has provoked artists to respond ever since.¹⁷ Just as the translator’s task is to ‘liberate the language imprisoned in a work’ in the words of Walter Benjamin, so artists have always mined Dante for inspiration.¹⁸ And just as literary translations of Dante are frequently not literal, neither have artists always sought to visualise its conceptual complexities exactly, rather concentrating on trying to convey the poem’s raw energy. The chief aim of Dante was to create a song of Christian understanding, yet centuries of readers have thought otherwise, Victor Hugo for one claiming it was beyond human comprehension, whilst others claim it is still as good as poetry gets. In arranging the *Comedy* to accommodate both his intensely personal feelings, and to transfigure a large amount of political, social and theological material, the poet attracted artists who in their own way were agents of transformation. The

8 right
Jheronimus Bosch
The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ears
and 9 below a detail
'the sin is inside the man'
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett



10 left
Recueil d'Arras folio 275
'Jeronimus Bos painctre'



11 Jheronimus Bosch *Tree-man* (detail) Vienna, Albertina



12 Jheronimus Bosch *Owl's Nest*
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

poem is confessional, and like Augustine, confesses there to be truths which neither the poet's nor any other single mind can fully embrace whilst confronting the ultimate questions (God's questions?) calling on humanity to collaborate and somehow recover the true meaning of goodness and cooperation. The name for that collaboration is love.

Dante is with Aquinas, that "knowledge is a prerequisite of love, and [the *Comedy* is] aimed primarily at the enlightenment of his readership in order to provoke their love of justice, order and truth." Not at all sentimental, it expresses the value of body as well as soul, and like all great art, the work communicates even before it is fully understood. Now we see its potential for Bosch. Allegory and vision link it to the medieval period. The text is Bible-centred, conveys a precise vision of the times in which the artist lived, "this world is constantly measured by the eternal and immutable standards of the next... [and carries] a clear and ample warning to his generation of the dangers under which they lived, as well as a prophecy of the rewards of right-living... [its] complement of invective and promise, of *exempla* of good and evil, of history and vision, of warning and philosophy, brings it often closer to the form and texture of the Bible than to either the Aeneid or the Ethics."¹⁹

Dogmatic, cruel, mesmerising to the point of haunting the imagination like no other, Dante's vision of Hell had an afterlife in Bosch.²⁰ Lost in the wood, the poet can only escape by going down into the shadows of Hell, a spiritual journey across an unnerving landscape of reprisal through the darkness towards the light, meeting along the way the damned who confess their sins and remember their lives with pain, pride, regret and longing. Bitter revenge, vendetta, terror, all the primitive menacing elements of medieval cruelty that inspired fiery imagery of a divine justice in Bosch as, like Dante, he struggles towards the merest glimpse of Paradise.²¹

As labyrinthine as Dante, with Bosch we are equally liable to choke on the amount of information there is to digest, both addressing questions of inner life, faith and politics as articulately as any modern man. Yeats considered Dante 'the chief imagination of Christendom'. Dante gave us a universe that resonates across the centuries. So Jheronimus Bosch is not only a medieval man; for us he is from a lost world, a "classic riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" – an enigma with few variations.²² Considering all the books that have been written, the research undertaken, the theories put forward, we still do not know a great deal about him. The documented facts are very few. The contradictory statements about him build a picture of a man who is an unresolved paradox. He was a heretic, he was Gnostic, a Cathar, a Rosicrucian; he was an astrologer, an alchemist, a drug addict. And this is only a sampling of the enigma variations on offer. Every book piles on the contradictions.

Anyone who touches him seems to have got carried away to some extent with a particular theory. Any theory. To bolster their case, scholars will fetishise a formulation, an idea, the merest shadow of an innocuous suggestion, until it disappears under a welter of detail. And Bosch delivers plenty of detail. They were all looking for the 'silver bullet' that would explain his work. His reputation has been on a rollercoaster ever since. Even his existence has been brought into doubt. Was he one person? Was the signature work that of a man, his family, their atelier workshop, several or many hands or one? Setting out to discover the facts one soon discovers the difficulties of trying to piece together a medieval life story. In the style of a medieval quest, every answer poses another question. His footsteps are hard to follow. "And whether these clues are sought in the realm of scriptural exegeses, folklore, or magical, alchemistic, or astrological treatises, the end results are nearly always the same, presenting us with an incoherent and unwieldy mass of data that often make his personality more remote and inaccessible than before."²³

A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside a lot of speculation, he really is an enigma. He knew, nobody better, where his visions came from. But he did not set out to describe them for us in the manner of a William Blake (or at least if he did, there is no record of it). The paintings

seethe with spiritual turmoil. If you stop and look at many of them for any length of time you can begin to sense the fear and trembling he possibly felt as he worked. The inner turmoil tormenting his mind is something we have to work out for ourselves. One way, perhaps, to unlock the mystery, is history.

PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER was a genius with a style completely his own. He combined the political with the personal, the topical with the universal and the surreal with the socially observed, with a voice and style all his own, expressed in a spirit of irresistible, irrepressible mischief and an unrivalled idiosyncratic imagination of enduring appeal.

Yet while Bruegel sat on the cultural doorstep of the new world, his vantage point remains medieval. He spends his time looking backwards. Alive at the dawn of a new era, he cannot quite manage to climb the steps and get over the threshold. While his contemporaries passed through the triumphal arch of the Renaissance by which European art entered the 16th century, Bruegel with his apparent mixture of high and lowbrow art, this man of the people, with his formidable fluency of both style and content never entered the new world. He is stuck in the past.

Bruegel is one of the art world's most notorious cases of mistaken identity.²⁴ "We have scant documentary evidence."²⁵ Karel van Mander has a lot to answer for.²⁶ Reading him reminds the reader how stories need not be accurate to be influential. His view of this supremely comic artist that few "can contemplate seriously and without laughing" who when he "was in the Alps he swallowed all those mountains and rocks which, upon returning home, he spat out again onto canvases and panels, so faithfully was he able, in this respect and others, to follow Nature" and "dressed in peasants' costume" continues to lead so many astray. The veracity of his account, magnified in the telling and retelling over 35 years before it was written down, makes it all the more dubious.²⁷

By such paper-thin scripts is history written.

What we consider a memory may well be a memory of a memory that we refine every time we tell it. "We think we can trust our memory, and that all of the details are there, just like that. Actually it's just the opposite. Imagine an object that can almost float, that sinks through water extremely slowly. That's the way memory works."²⁸ Writers are known to be great embellishers. Memory may be no more than a reflection in a curved mirror; it may be genuine or an inspiration, borrowed or suggested, fallible historical truth or narrative truth, direct experience or the intercourse of many minds, even exposed to the general commonwealth of knowledge, always subject to the unconscious emotions and gross distortions of time and fantasy.²⁹ This story was 35 years old and, arguably, it conjures a "false romantic memory of the past, the history which is not one's own but lives in the imagination..."³⁰

Subsequently differing views as to Bruegel's birthplace, uncertainty over his date of birth, the lack of knowledge with regards his education and training, or where he lived before the last six years of his life, the controversy over his religious views, the precise content of the drawings "he got his wife to burn when he was on his deathbed", the speculation about his politics, associates, finances, how and when he died (although we know the year and place),³¹ the list of disputed and lost works, it is all endless – as are the myths and legends that have grown up about him.³²

Trivial and meaningless or objective reportage; a heretic or philosophically consistent; illustrator, cartoonist, or commercial artist; the complexity of the intellectual and spiritual content of his paintings continue to provoke argument. Moralist, humanist or humourist, he has nevertheless fashioned our image of the Low Countries in the 16th century. Viewed as the painter of images used on Christmas cards and jolly Flemish peasant romps his imagery is far more profound and timeless than that. A simple equation between the artist and his work is

not easy to calculate. He constantly concealed himself beneath a veneer of impersonality yet his works constantly expose his inner self and his times. Traces of himself and his age crawl out of every image. There was no hiding place. Tension between the self and non-self, subjective and objective animate all of his work. Passionate, expressive, sociable, emotional on the one hand, he is also religious, reserved, tormented, frightened, displaying a sense of decorum about whatever he expresses by whatever elliptical means he uses. Bruegel's subtle art relies on visual metaphor, on implication and absence, on visual clues that can hint at things not overtly expressed that must be completed by the spectator. His audience completes the pictures.

The way in which the audience does that relies in equal measure on memory, observation and imagination. Nothing is left to chance. Every figure, every gesture, every mark he made is the end product of complete, total, slow deliberation. Yet however studiously casual the arrangement of the elements and motifs, those effortless results have all been planned with meticulous attention to religious and political events in a deeply spiritual world-view. His vivid intelligence, visual wit, complex structures, and semiotics, all work together to convey distinct moods and emotions with deadly accuracy. His own inner doubts and those of his time are clothed in the certainty of an assured and formal pictorial language. He expresses anxiety in images of conviviality, the poetry of melancholia and fear hidden in colourful canvases that involve and lift our spirits, elaborating and enhancing it all with a wry humour. There are moments of revelation hidden everywhere, the ordinary, the banal, the unremarkable all harbouring comment on religion, his times, and man's place in it.

Intellectual preoccupations, objective historical accounts of biblical scenes transposed into the northern Europe of his day, a wealth of references, visual coherence, elusive, emotional, the intelligence of construction, complexity of content, eloquent balance between formal resolution and innovative ideas, style, and subject matter – every part of the surface filled with detail and incident, sophisticated and skilful layering of pictorial conventions all combine to deliver images of extraordinary intensity and in some cases mystery. We are presented with a multiplicity of systems of representation, and different types of illusion. In spite of the glut of content we still believe in the resulting image as a whole, as a slice of reality. Faced with them, it is difficult to resist thinking "Life's like that". We are constantly surprised. Bruegel never sacrifices his artistic integrity, and the stranger the means, the more the pictures seem to ring true.

Bruegel is the Shakespeare of art, straddling high and low art with an epic vision that is truly universal, an everyman for everyman, one whose only fault was honesty.³³ "One man in his time plays many parts" – and Bruegel certainly did that.³⁴ Or as Studs Terkel, that great recorder of American voices wrote, "Every man a king. Every man a Demosthenes". Bruegel gives us a Demosthenean insight into the politics and culture of his age, rhetoric and the visual arts.

Bruegel is not merely the sequel to Bosch, nor is Bosch a prequel to Bruegel. They are like men 'from the day before yesterday and the day after tomorrow'.³⁵ Bosch is concerned with the afterlife, Bruegel with the here and now. Bosch is driven by evil, devils, and the world to come – Heaven and Hell; Bruegel faced hell on earth. Located somewhere between the Middle Ages and the Age of Discovery, with Bosch and Bruegel for company, we find ourselves slouching towards the Renaissance.

But Bruegel was no slouch. He was a man in a hurry. He painted fast,³⁶ of the 41 paintings we know – 35 were completed in the last seven years of his life.³⁷ He seems to have prepared little, left few sketches,³⁸ painted thinly, certainly with a light hand even when his brush was heavily loaded, the clarity of vision, the versatility and sheer simplicity of many of the strokes as he makes his mark, the freedom and ease with which he seems to have worked demonstrating his mastery.³⁹ He told stories, he dramatised, a few brushstrokes giving vitality that sweeps all before him. He amused and challenged his audience in equal measure. The works remain fresh and spontaneous, whichever of the various techniques appropriate to each medium

he worked. “His brushwork changed like the weather in April.”⁴⁰

It remained ‘fresh’ for a century after his death, competition for his work becoming the catalyst for replicas, copies, pastiches, and forgeries in their hundreds, as the family business met the needs of the market. The colossal scale of this dynastic production line has only become apparent in the last 25 years with various publications and exhibitions.⁴¹ The ‘poetic licence’ taken by some of the derivations only enhanced the fascination and confusion over provenance, the *tüchlein* Bruegels in particular, *The Fall of Icarus* and *The Wine of St Martin’s Day* being subject to reattribution.

“A picture is a mute poem and a poem a picture with a voice” Juan Fernández Navarrete

Bosch also had an ‘afterlife’ on earth through forgery and imitation as well as Boschian-themed prints, Boschian half-lengths, and larger paintings derived from the demonic motifs and themes of Bosch. The extent of the scientific work now being undertaken on both artists will continue to impact the appreciation of their development, chronology, and overall attribution of the works.⁴²

With both these artists we are in a house of juxtapositions. On the threshold of a new world we remain in the Middle Ages. As Bosch delves into divine realities, Bruegel focuses on the earthly life of Jesus. As ordinary believers may grapple with the paradox of how divinity and humanity can co-exist so these two wrestle with a profound acceptance of the world as it is, even in its saddest and most bestial manifestations, investigating humanity’s essential but elusive and enigmatic truths, as they paint their warnings about the world to come, both here on earth and in Heaven and Hell. In so much as their thematic and imaginative concerns cross over from the matter-of-fact to the other side of death, their work may well have appeared frighteningly perverse to some of their audiences, that perversity merely the chaff from which the artist tirelessly endeavours to separate the wheat of elemental human nature.⁴³

Threshold: the word implies so much. It connects and separates times and spaces. It conjures up an image of a door already open; it is simply up to us the audience to step inside. All everyone has to do is to step over a threshold. Surely it is an artificial boundary, one that blurs with time? As we approach the threshold⁴⁴ we may well experience “being at the same time summoned and released”⁴⁵ as we contemplate images that conjure “a violence from within that protects us from a violence without” and attempt to negotiate our own correspondence with the contradictory dimensions of artistic reality.⁴⁶ Poetry is an elusive word like art. Robert Pinsky in his essay on the *Responsibilities of the Poet* writes that an artist “needs not so much an audience, as to feel a need to answer, a promise to respond. The promise may be a contradiction, it may be unwanted, it may go unheeded... but it is owed, and the sense that it is owed is a basic requirement”. The audience may well be led beyond everything familiar – “Back out of all this now too much for us” towards a fleeting glimpse of the potential order of things ‘beyond confusion’ to a place where meaning is always just out of reach as these artists try pressing back against the pressure of reality.⁴⁷ They may attempt to conjure what is indeed desirable, merely possible or only imaginable, but they are nevertheless calls to action. They are engaged, and are calling us to join them.

Conventional wisdom holds that we should ‘show not tell’, but these two tell and tell and tell. By turns captivating, ambitious, funny, painful, they are not simply painting, they bend the girders of an inherited form to their own purposes to become touchstones of western art.

Looking both ways

"It is the habit of art critics to review from the inside out, starting with the object and adding bits of history and context to suggest a kind of omniscience."⁴⁸ Whereas, it is possible that art and art writing are parallel ways of explaining the world and our place in it. Images cannot be wholly explained by finding meaning in a work of art, as if by naming some message that we believe the artist intended, one had definitively explained it. How does one know that meaning was intentionally sent, or received and understood? "It is particularly speculative to build an entire case on a reaction that cannot be tested, namely the reaction of the contemporary spectator, and a motive, that of the contemporary painter, which remains undisclosed."⁴⁹ Painters do manipulate their audience, but how can we know who was the average spectator, or the specific group for whom a work was intended, when in most cases we have no idea of the original commission or the recipient, or the contemporary judgement passed upon it?

In order to do that we have to take in what a picture looks like and attempt to see how that accords with what was happening in the world around the artist at the time. There is a lot more on the surface of these pictorial artefacts than many today acknowledge. With the very fabric of their realities changing, what matters is what the painting meant to the painter and the extent to which these are descriptive works in addition to any intention they might come bearing the gift of some universal meaning. As a counter to Brookner's view of an imaginary 'contemporary spectator' we might consider the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski whose great interest was language and context.⁵⁰ He made the point that no matter how good a translation he made, it still turned out that if you did not know what the people involved in the text were doing, and did not understand the culture, then you could not make sense of the text, a problem solved by Malinowski with theories of 'context of situation' and 'context of culture'. Without them you would be at a loss as to what was going on.

Or we could look to Alpers: "[The poet] is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious not of what is dead but of what is already living."⁵¹ This implies that there is something to be born out of existing work with which an artist might be in competition, some rediscovery provoked by consideration of a tradition, a discriminating attitude suggested by engagement with an earlier piece of work, that might serve as "both a resource and constraint".

The mystery of that 'what is to be done' is at the heart of why we make works of art at all. It is worthy of consideration here as we contemplate Bosch and Bruegel, the passing of the baton, the 'reactivation' of the former artist by the latter, the 'handing down of beliefs, legends, customs and practices' with the subsequent development and emergence of something completely new, and this looking both ways, at and from within a painting. Great artists take account of the manner of human perception as well as the circumstances of viewing their work and we need to understand that. The observer is often cast into oblivion when it is the key relationship in any appreciation of art that needs seeking out. The ability of a painting to titillate, engage, evoke curiosity or is ignored, the impact it might have, or the way in which it might enable 'participation', are all questions relevant to this venture.

Period inner visions

“Neither does He see in one fashion by the eye, in another by the mind” Augustine⁵²

*“Within the painter, there are two things: the eye and the mind, they must serve each other”
Cézanne⁵³*

FOR ART to have meaning, it needs an audience. A painting is not simply an image, paint or tempera on canvas or wood. It is a living experience, and real nature is often shaped by the form that experience takes: where and when one sees it for a start.⁵⁴ The role of the spectator is always underestimated.⁵⁵ The way paintings functioned in their original context being the key to their understanding. Like the atheist who comes to mock but stays to pray, given the right circumstances, we can all be reeled in by the power of a moment, or in this case an image.⁵⁶ The artist is not an impartial witness. Art warps and at times destroys the life it draws upon. There are facts surrounding artistic production and the fiction it expresses. Fictions influence the way we see the facts. Where to a certain extent an image displays history or attempts to give expression to historical record, the separation of fact from that expression is a subject for philosophical debate. Acknowledged fiction comes at the factual world from a different standpoint, fiction influencing the way we read facts just as much as a particular version of a historical record does.⁵⁷

The drama of anticipation on seeing a new and complex image for the first time can spark sensations that overwhelm the facts of history. Was the artist uncovering and displaying evidence or creating it? Was the world telling them in some way this is what it was like, or is the artist telling the world? It is impossible to answer that dilemma, it cannot be resolved, irreconcilable forces reduced simply to an expression of marks, a set piece in oils or tempera, an isolated incident on the battlefield of ideas, an encounter in some titanic struggle. And to be alive at the turn of the 15th century was without doubt to be witness to titanic struggles.

The notion of the ‘period eye’ by which Baxandall meant the social acts and cultural practices that shape attention to visual form within a given culture, has been extended to the concept of the ‘period inner eye’ whereby devotional paintings were produced to endorse forms of prayer and meditation beyond what was purely visible on the surface of the image, in some way to mobilise the ‘mind’s eye’ in its quest for God. Where Baxandall highlighted non-artistic influences on the artist, both in the way something was visualised, and how the resulting image was received, effectively the social drivers of artistic style and reception, Falkenburg and others have considered art that confronts the pious beholder with holy figures who may respond directly to personal prayer, in effect creating devotional manuals that demand audience involvement.⁵⁸ From the viewpoint of the Middle Ages that saw Creation as an image, a ‘mirror’ of God, late medieval painting developed to the point where art could be interpreted in the context of the *devotio moderna* as an aid to transcendental inner vision. Thus, in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Jesus Christ, the mirror of perfect humanity, and God the Son of Man, the New Adam, challenges us to return the stare he fixes on us.⁵⁹ His staring eyes are set firmly on us, His audience, the viewer. He has certainly caught Adam’s eye, but the viewer with his ‘judgemental eye’ has become the painting’s true protagonist turning it into a mirror of the human soul as we undertake speculative spiritual insight. Everything before us is there to stimulate our imagination, maybe urging us to join in a memory game, engage with God, and open our eyes to what is true and false.⁶⁰

Game or not, our eyes traversing the seedy regions of the mind, we are certainly emotionally engaged; as Saint-Exupéry wrote, “one sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.” We are enveloped by the stage set Bosch has contrived for us, a wide dark stage, we can never be sure what is waiting in the wings. Here tolerance is not about anything goes, although for many that is the superficial message; this is about facing



13,14 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Procession to Calvary* (detail) and the complete painting. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



16 Jheronimus Bosch
The Mass of St Gregory (detail)
Madrid, Museo Nacional
del Prado

15 Pieter Bruegel *Procession to Calvary* (detail) Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



17 Jheronimus Bosch *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail)
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

our desires honestly whether we act on them or not. What's the plot? Here it is the discovery of concealed connections between events in the narrative that Bosch has prepared for us, events that might run through the minds of the devout like the beads of a rosary, each one a separate entity but each one leading to and from another. Close your eyes and begin to run over the Rosary of possibility; anxious people attempting to deal with a world beyond their understanding, grappling for handholds, meditating on what it means to have faith. Kierkegaard got it right when he wrote that geniuses are like thunderstorms, they go against the wind, terrify people, cleanse the air. This painting does that. If that does not get us closer to God it may get us closer to Augustine. "I found myself far off from you in the land of unlikeness" implies the Incarnation brought God nearer to humanity at the same time revealing the distance that separates them both.⁶¹

And it may bring us closer to Bosch as well. One long poetic, passionate, private prayer, the *Confessions* are Augustine's acknowledgment that he has heard God in his 'inner ear' calling him to confess.⁶² His own moral wanderings took him, like the prodigal son whom he recognised in himself, to that 'land of unlikeness' as he forced himself to finally confront God within; the dark and evil force that animated his body, and the thin particle of light imprisoned within his soul, that particle of divinity that he fought to liberate as he searched for mystical union with God.⁶³ That union with God and ultimate self-knowledge happens in his heart, and in *memoria* which is also where he confronts his temptations – the predicament of mankind in a post-lapsarian world – "a world of misdirected desire, of linguistic misinterpretation, of alienation from God and from human nature, created "in His own image and likeness"... the construct of unlikeness shaped later medieval approaches to the central issues of spirituality and intellectual life."⁶⁴

That is Bosch too, and why his work appealed to those for whom happiness was never more than the temporary abatement of angst and who imagined that death would soon arrive for them all. His first audience was trying to come to terms with death, they might believe that they could come to terms with it through "a form of worship, not propitiatory worship of death as a Deity, but worship of a higher Deity by whose power all things, including death are controlled" and they certainly were able to approach it through looking at art.⁶⁵ As Augustine confesses to *curiositas*, the 'lust of the eyes', so Bosch's audience was being made to confront their sins and search within themselves for God.⁶⁶

That the artistry of Bosch can be viewed in this light, as intimate, contemplative, and a devotional aid, particularly when it comes to *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is questionable – but not impossible. Separation of the holy figures from the rest of the picture is a simple device that makes that meditation easier to grasp. Consider the holy figures grieving in the right foreground of *Procession to Calvary*.⁶⁷ The meaning of a Bruegel painting emerges from the way in which an audience interprets it. The relationship of a figure to Christ in a painting such as the *Procession* would impact on the personal significance an audience would attach to it. Bruegel does not just *address* his audience as Bosch does, he wants to have a conversation.

Just as Christ all but disappears in *The Mass of St Gregory* by Bosch, so He is all but invisible in this huge panel by Bruegel. The moral and religious framework from within which that audience makes its judgement would envelop the narrative each person constructed for themselves in order to meditate on the picture, and to take something from it. Bruegel's dilemma is our dilemma. Personal it may be, nevertheless these images are not puzzles, but they do have "a level of meaning beyond the obvious".⁶⁸ Because they were directed at an intelligent, discriminating audience, the intellectual effort required to grasp the full meaning of Bruegel's paintings should not come as a surprise. By reversing the conventional way of composing an image of Calvary, by diminishing Christ to the point where He all but disappears in a sea of humanity, Bruegel turns convention upside down, and with it the question of medieval piety.

The relationship of the audience to a sacred subject is something new as Christ progresses through a profane and secular arc, good and evil are inextricably linked in a metaphysical battle across space and time. The world had changed, and art changed with it.

There is considerably more to this than simply consideration of the artist's work. Exactly how much more we are unlikely ever to discover. Bruegel's circle of friends and associates cannot be ignored. If "it would appear foolhardy to align our artist with any of the anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic forces in the Netherlands"⁶⁹ the significance of a circle that included Abraham Ortelius, Christophe Plantin, Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert and Gerard Mercator cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. The libertine, the printer, the theologian and the mapmaker, were not minor people with whom Bruegel was acquainted. They all fell foul of orthodox belief. Lives spent trimming views, switching loyalties, assessing powerbases, were lives spent on the edge, never far from prison or profit. Ortelius's family fell under suspicion for heresy from 1535, and throughout his life questions were repeatedly asked as to his beliefs. At the end of 1567 he wrote of the state of affairs in the Low Countries as being threatened by "Catholic evil, Protestant fever, Huguenot disease and different vexations from black riders and other soldiers".⁷⁰ Plantin was twice arrested for heresy, and mysteriously disappeared more than once in his life; Coornhert spent a year in prison, Mercator spent seven months in prison the reason for which has never become clear. In their desire for a quiet life, their Catholicism was intended for the outside world; they made a show of being conventional Catholics but surely were religious individualists.⁷¹

Whether or not these and other men became Protestants, Luther's scepticism towards the authority of the Church, and drive for a new independence in scriptural exegesis to deliver both critical explanation and interpretation of Biblical texts in order to have a direct personal encounter with the word of God, resulted in the subjective viewpoint taken by Bruegel when he turned the conventions of composition upside down: the uncertainty with which the audience confronted such images being a deliberate challenge on the part of the artist, and a problem of interpretation for us.⁷² The hermeneutical self-consciousness of *The Procession to Calvary* in which Christ is all but invisible is no longer "a passive object of theological meditation or emphatic devotion, but as a *principle* of active interpretation to be applied by the individual viewer to the buzzing confusion of a world that has lost its secure, metaphysical footing".⁷³ By superimposing topical criticism into his indictment of human spirituality Bruegel injects something new into art. We have moved from medieval devotional images to inverted biblical narratives (which engaged the audience but essentially served the same purpose) of Van Amstel and Bles, to something far more accessible; the secularisation of the devotional image demonstrating not only man's inability to learn from past mistakes, but also reflecting the doctrinal and political uncertainties that resulted from the religious confusion of the age. Whilst Bruegel may still be lost somewhere in a personal crisis of faith, he nevertheless is sufficiently sure of the universal principles of Christian truth to display the confidence of a 'new man' without any lack of certainty.

The question remains, if the biblical narrative has become inverted, does it serve the same meditative purpose? Is the audience really engaged in a process of 'mental visualisation' similar to that of late medieval devotional images? Or is the experience of the spectator to the sacred image so undermined that it has become totally changed? There certainly can be no mystical experience of a divine presence when faced with the uncertainty of the hermeneutic act. Where veneration is not an option, is subjective experience a valid substitute? How would you, a pious observer, interpret an image that does not follow a sacred model devised and sanctioned by the Church? Independent of the institution is such an image compromised? Does the accessibility of the image impact on its authenticity? Is this secularization of the devotional, a reformation of the image?

As devotional images would become reconfigured to suit the needs of religion, in effect what Koerner called the “visual equivalents of confessional texts” paintings were made to be read rather than merely looked at or worshipped. In that they mirrored devotional practice.⁷⁴

The certainties of religion are being challenged here by the subjectivity of the audience. As the authority of the Church is challenged so personal interpretation reshaped its imagery. Institutionalised belief had yet another challenge to face in artistic creation as sacred imagery was refashioned. It is far too exaggerated to claim a ‘crisis of interpretation’ on the eve of the Reformation as Koerner does. But the cultural changes that art reflected from the philosophical to the political, and from the social to the spiritual, mirror the age of discovery as old certainties once beyond argument were now subjected to rational challenge.



18 Jheronimus Bosch *Crucifixion with a Donor* Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België



19 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross*
 Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial



20 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross*
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Pilgrimages

More than meets the eye

“The tale isn’t beautiful until you add to it” Italo Calvino

THE CROSS and the Resurrection are two parts of one triumph. For Christians, the Resurrection makes the Cross a victory, and the Crucifixion no longer a tragedy. It was God’s victory over evil. Considering the artist’s obsession with the evil in mankind, with armies of the damned, and legions of the corrupt, all parading across his panels, none of whom will be shown any mercy on Judgement Day, one might expect God’s plan for redemption to feature more in the work of Bosch. But images that demonstrate the healing power of redemptive love are strangely absent. Far from occupying a central place in his art, the suffering Lord is not much in evidence despite emulation of Christ’s sacrifice being a way to salvation. Passionate expressions of grief and sorrow are seldom seen in the devotional panels by Bosch. But passionate hatred there certainly is.

Bosch appears only to have concerned himself with three aspects of the Passion – the crowning with thorns (twice), Ecce Homo (once), and carrying the Cross (arguably three). He did not paint the arrest, betrayal, flagellation, the 14 stations of the Cross, deposition, lamentations, Pietà, entombment, or the other parts of the cycle.⁷⁵ What was included in representations of each scene was proscribed by convention, and Bosch did not appear to go much by artistic convention – except in the possible *Crucifixion* in Brussels, known to some as *Calvary with Donor*, that may be the central panel of a lost triptych.⁷⁶ Christ’s figure has an inner intensity: His head is down, His eyes are closed, the expression is of deep, inward concentration, attention and trust. Spiritually He is already with his Father, so the body has a repose and serenity about it. It may be by the artist, but it is not what we expect of Bosch.⁷⁷

The apparently pessimistic view of humanity and its failings that led to Bosch’s absorption with evil and away from his “suffering redeemer” nevertheless required devotional images as an aid to prayer.⁷⁸ Here, the narrative is all-important, because the audience for these works ‘listened with their eyes’.⁷⁹ The spiritual content drove their contemplation, their journey in faith enhanced by the pilgrimage of man. The penetrating gaze of *Christ Carrying the Cross* towards the pious beholder equates the sins of humanity today with those of Jesus’ tormentors as part of a ‘perpetual Passion’.⁸⁰ The guilt is ours.⁸¹ There is nothing of the lurid intensity of the torture imagery of today. However, a moment from the Passion of Jesus, a once and for all time moment, for everyone, catches at the viewer. Struggling beneath the weight of a huge cross, it is unusually large, Christ identifies the wickedness of mankind at large in that look of reproach. The cross is not the weight he really bears. For once, Bosch portrays no monsters, no deformities, none of his trademark repertoire of grossly distorted characters, as he promotes an intense personal relationship with God in an iconic devotional image. We are being called to account.⁸² And for the first time, we are involved in an altarpiece. There is none of the drama of the Viennese version of this composition, nor the outer panel of the *St Antony* triptych in Lisbon, none of the tension, no thieves, and no confessor. And a few ugly heads are a long way from the viciousness of the persecutors in *Christ Crowned with Thorns* in London. Some of the faces are familiar, but that is all. As ordinary and unremarkable and undramatic as this painting is, the idea is something new.

The drama is in us. It was also a more positive side of Bosch’s vision, an alternative to sin, a way of escape, and a way to salvation. The intensity and claustrophobic nature of some of these pictures take off from Van der Weyden and “the rise of the dramatic close-up in 15th century devotional painting”.⁸³ The expression on Christ’s face was then used by Bosch for

St Antony in the central panel of the Lisbon triptych and the Passion scene now in London. Salvation through suffering and temptation as displayed by the saints was a staple of the times, with the Devil intervening directly in the course of human affairs. The questioning expressions and serene countenance of Christ and Antony, staring out from these pictures, with a “gaze that strikes to the heart” offered hope, and heroes to contemplate. That gaze is unrelenting. We have an obligation to look. There are no halos and no heavenly lights. This is about “living in Jesus’s company”.⁸⁴ We are again being encouraged towards the *devotio moderna*. In the middle distance is St John the Evangelist supporting the Virgin Mary who is weeping, located directly above the head of Christ who is surrounded by a hostile crowd. No longer the usual secondary figures in the composition, the persecutors are clearly “principal actors in the drama, in which – a hitherto unknown phenomenon in an altarpiece – the spectator, identified with the executioners, takes part directly. Christ is no longer suffering because of His martyrdom, but because of the demonic bewitchment of mankind.”⁸⁵

In a society that embraced this style of personal piety, eventually the dominant outlet for pious expression during the 15th century, retreating from the world of public ritual to an introspective world of the mind and imagination required stimulation. Such an intense and creatively imaginative method of reaching out to God required an equally imaginative response from the devout. The spread of late-medieval *speculum* texts with the advent of printing assisted this private, interior, contemplative life; images also fuelled their devotions. Mankind’s distance from God that Bosch portrays as a realm of unlikeness required the viewer to read through the picture – spiritual vision won through the process of prayer and meditation conjured up in the mind’s eye by contemplating an eternal image. This composition transcends the historical event and lends it that eternal significance.⁸⁶

Pilgrimages were a part of life (see chapters 2 and 5) but ‘a pilgrimage of the imagination’ – an inward, spiritual journey – was possible for everyone. The genius behind this idea was a Franciscan who studied with Aquinas, Giovanni di Fidanza (c1217-74) known now as St Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, whose meditation on the Passion, *The Tree of Life*, was both influential and popular in the emotional way it connected the reader with Christ’s life. Readers were drawn into the drama from the start: “With Christ I am nailed to the cross”. It became one of the roots of the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, a phrase that has its origins during the lifetime of Bosch.⁸⁷ For the faithful to make a pilgrimage in spirit to the scenes of Christ’s suffering and death with devout meditation at each incident became more richly endowed with indulgences than any other act, and enabled them more literally to obey the injunction to take up the Cross and follow Him. So popular did this become that the *rederijkerskamers* performed secular versions of the Stations in public. From being spectators of Christ’s suffering, Christians became participants in the Passion.

The medieval pilgrimage grew out of penitence. The essence of it was wandering; like the Apostles pilgrims were not *going* anywhere. The journey not the arrival mattered.⁸⁸ A pilgrimage entailed wandering until one had received evidence that one had been forgiven for one’s sins, with perpetual wandering until one received divine evidence that forgiveness had been forthcoming. Hence ‘a pilgrimage of the imagination’ necessitated one’s eyes wandering across the details of a painting, thinking oneself into the image as one travelled into oneself as an act of personal devotion in search of the divine.⁸⁹ In the wake of disasters such as the Plague, the intensification of personalised devotion and mysticism that singled out the themes of suffering, the Passion and death were only exacerbated.

As God became incarnate in Christ, and by His suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification, so Christ eclipsed all the holy places, becoming himself the holiest place. To be ‘in Christ’ was therefore to be in the holiest place. Another Father of the Church, St Irenaeus, wrote “God’s glory is man made fully alive and man is fully alive when he beholds God”.⁹⁰

That is what Bosch painted when at his most optimistic: passion scenes that were a quintessence of period inner visions, a series of visual dialogues that answered the needs of ‘perpetual Passion’, and devotional images as an aid to prayer.

What then happened to drive Bosch to turn from imagery of religious consolation to pictures of fury and menace that more closely reflected the daily lives of his countrymen is unclear. Drawings of deformed, crippled, miserable, plague-ridden beggars, may hold the indication of the change.⁹¹ *The Ascent to Calvary* now in Vienna is a far more brutal scene.⁹² Possibly a workshop piece, the rabble’s lust for violence is a dose of cold realism inserted into a traditional scene in a mix of the sacred and the profane. The contrast is clear, between good and evil, the hope of Christ and the despair of the thieves, between the divine and the demonic. *Christ Before Pilate*, an image after Bosch in Princeton, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, a decent copy in the Escorial,⁹³ and *another copy*, a triptych version in Valencia, the London *Christ Mocked (the Crowning with Thorns)*, culminating in the extreme threat of evil, ‘Christ’s nightmare’ De Tolnay called it, among the bestial and the animal in *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Ghent, a disputed late painting or studio variation, to observe with Delevoey (1960) that *peu à peu leur type se fortifie* – little by little their characters strengthen.⁹⁴ At the end of the line “Nowhere else does ordinary humankind look so ugly, so menacingly evil”.⁹⁵ Like stills from a film, static fragments of narrative, these paintings feature the depressing physiognomy of Christ’s tormentors, conveying character through facial expression, the surface of the face as window to the soul. Many dispute the order of paintings suggested by Delevoey, and overall the attributions are problematic, but the point is well made. The persecution of Christ intensifies as Bosch grew older, the years pass, for him it seems the end of the world fast approaches, and the devotional nature of his pictures grew less.

Uncomfortable viewing

“Man perceives in the world only what already lies within him; but to perceive what lies within him man needs the world; for this, however, activity and suffering are indispensable”
Hugo von Hofmannsthal⁹⁶

There are paintings that are so achingly familiar to us from being endlessly reproduced and referred to, that they are never really looked at. People just fail to look hard enough at the original, to investigate what was really behind their creation.⁹⁷ Then there are others in the same category of images with which we are if anything, over-familiar, that are subject to ever-increasing scrutiny it is difficult to approach them without preconceptions. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is one of these. Many of the paintings of Bosch are in both these categories. In reality, they all resemble novels that can be read over and over again throughout a lifetime.

Christ Carrying the Cross, now in Ghent, is an example of the first.⁹⁸ The 18 repellent faces within its tightly packed frame are regularly used as visual metaphors of repugnant, malign, intimidating, bestial, hateful figures, yet it is still all engrossing. You feel as if you can smell them, up close and personal these figures with their leering eyes, broken noses, gap teeth, belligerent chins, guile, slouching malevolence, like some force of nature, mouths full of pessimism – you just know they all stink. The same thick-set men with the same thick-set brains and the same thick-set knuckles the world over. Real life monsters, the quiet ones, are the people you pass on the street and never notice. That could never be said of the grotesques that people a Bosch painting. That projecting underlip seems to indicate a fixed contempt for the world around and everyone in it; those vaguely hominid fingers; that uncertain smile; that face with a complexion like the inside of a dirty coffee pot; “the stain of evil”⁹⁹ spreads out from this hostile crowd corroding the colours of these crude, lurid faces – art as a concentrated form of



21 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Crowned with Thorns*
London, National Gallery



22 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross*
Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten



23 After Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Before Pilate*
Princeton University Art Museum



24 Jheronimus Bosch (disputed) *Christ Mocked*
Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial



25 Jheronimus Bosch (disputed) *Christ Crowned with Thorns*
Valencia, Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes

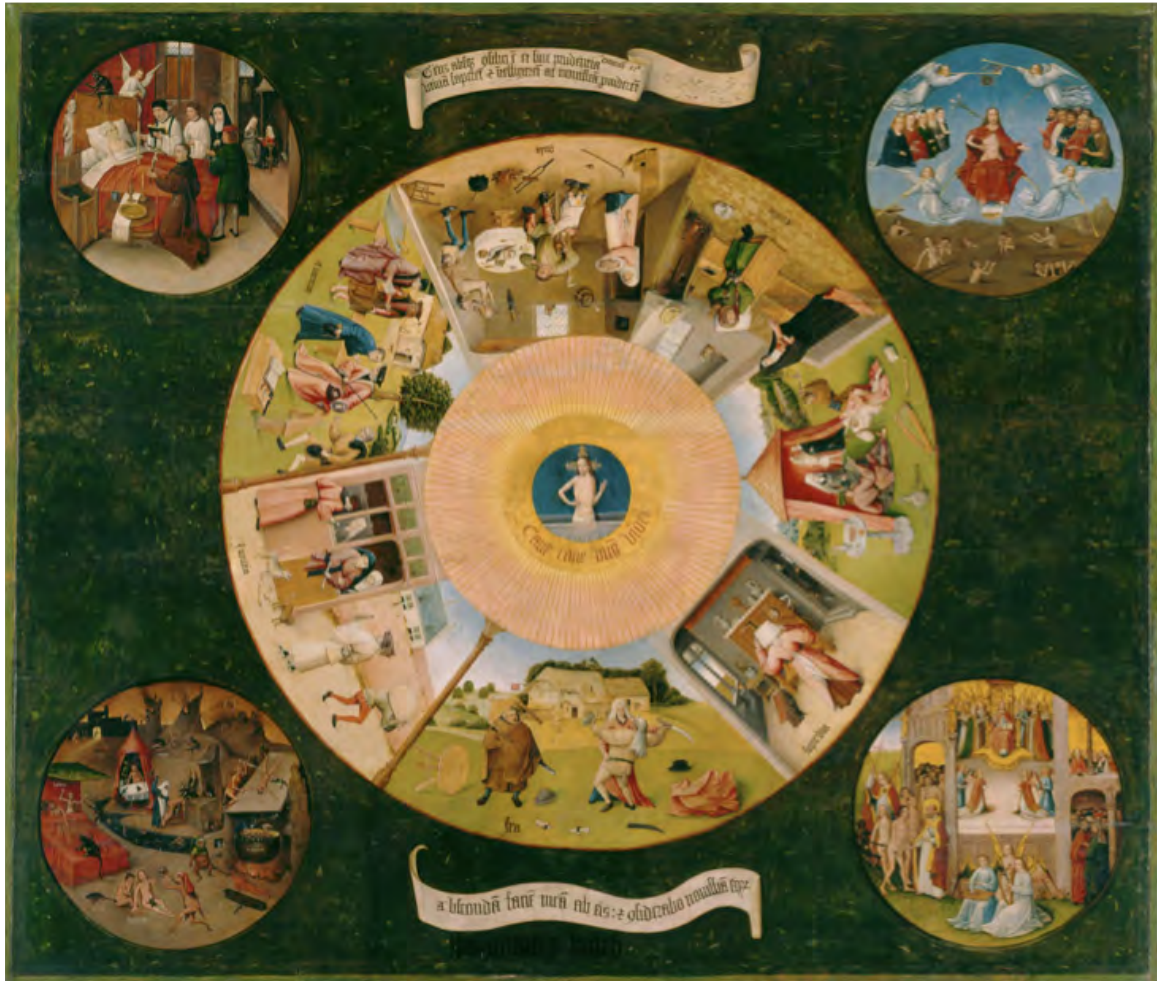
expression and this picture is nothing if not concentrated. All for one and one for all has turned into all for oneself.

For all the world Veronica looks as if she is already lost forever in the slipstream of eternity. Sliding out of the picture, in contrast with the mob, she is at peace, her face drained of blood. Where they are all menace, she is an artificial gem. Where they are caricatures of hate, she has the face of equanimity. They are blind to Christ, she carries God's imprint on her scarf.¹⁰⁰

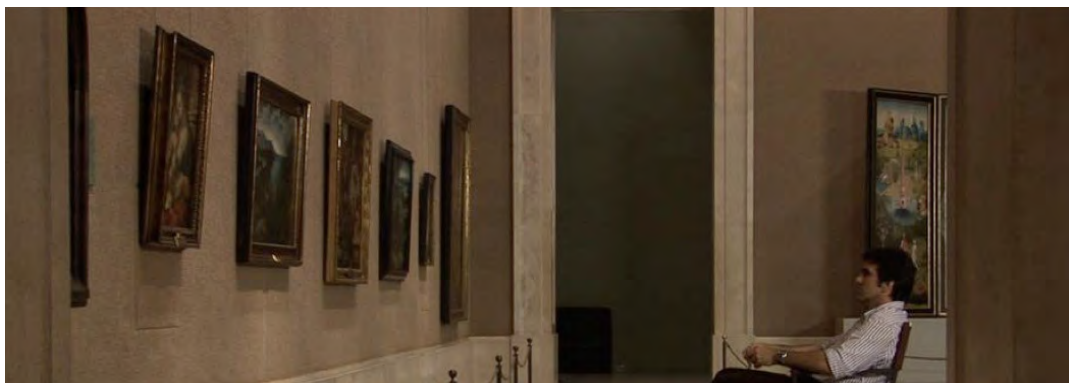
The painting's authenticity is regularly questioned with regards its provenance. Its style, composition and technique have raised yet more questions. For those that judge these things, only one thing is worse than the unexpected – that is the inevitable. There is nothing inevitable about this artist's work, and a great deal that is unexpected. Bosch was not some eccentric artistic genius: artistic certainly, genius undoubtedly, but eccentric? His pictures come from the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation leavened by way of Dracontius, Augustine and Aquinas. "Like Milton, he set out to show a *Paradise Lost*, "to justify the ways of God to man", but unlike Milton he did not see Lucifer as a tragic hero. For Bosch, judgement remained absolute, human sinfulness irreversible."¹⁰¹

Linked with another image not always securely attributed to Bosch, *Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns)*, that is usually considered an early work, neither painting conforms to the popular conception of the artist.¹⁰² Once again, the torturers surround Christ, pressing in on him, while he looks out at us. The tormenters are brutal, demented, fanatical, Christ looks to appeal to us to share in his suffering, the emotional intensity heightened by the proximity of the half-length figures. It is very claustrophobic. The tension is running high. The appeal is directed at us, the audience. We are involved. Are we the tormenters? Fierce imagery that not only gives a pessimistic view of the sincerity of our beliefs but may also be a warning to a corrupt Church.

As with other relatively small-scale devotional panels, the viewers are invited to meditate upon, and learn from Christ's suffering. These pictures are meant to unnerve us, to make us feel uncomfortable, and viewing them they do. Uncharacteristic of Bosch they may be, the figures inclining towards exaggeration and ridicule, nevertheless the leering brutes thrust their way into Christ's face and our sightlines through sheer determination not to miss out on this scene of ritual humiliation, the sense of crowding menace in this snatched moment is overwhelming. Jesus meek and mild, pale, resigned, utterly without resistance, turns the other cheek one last time. Will we deny Him again? The questions the artist posed his audience were difficult and unpleasant. Like God, Bosch does not let up. As we are drawn to Him, the eye of the divine judge is on us.¹⁰³



26 Jheronimus Bosch *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



27 Alejandro Vergara, senior curator of Flemish and Northern European paintings in room 56A at the Museo Nacional del Prado taking 'a long look'. Photo CODART eZine 15 October 2013

The ‘third eye’ of the artist

“*Daer es oeghe jeghen Ooeghe, spiegel jeghen Spiegel, beelds jeghen Beelde*”

Jan van Ruysbroeck¹⁰⁴

TWO PASSAGES from Déguileville’s *Dat boeck vanden pelgherym* printed in 1486¹⁰⁵ hold a clue to the Madrid table top, a problem picture for academics: *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*.¹⁰⁶ As to whether it was in fact a tabletop, or mounted in front of a *prie-dieu* or on a ceiling; whether it was an aid to prayer,¹⁰⁷ a discussion document or a piece of decoration; an early or a late work; whether it was by one or two artists, by Bosch at all or his workshop, a ‘pupil’, a ‘follower’ or is a later copy or even an outright and ‘indisputable forgery’ – it is a problem, an ‘unwanted stepchild’.¹⁰⁸

Déguileville wrote about ‘the supreme eye of Jesus Christ who is a mirror without blemish in which each man may see his own face’ and ‘the example of the eyeball . . . it can take in an entire person. So it is with a mirror.’¹⁰⁹ Bosch has frequently been seen as holding up mirrors to the world, both Biblical and profane. And in this painting, whoever painted it, “the entire world of sin is encapsulated in the all-seeing eye of God” the divine judge.¹¹⁰ In the eye’s pupil stands the Man of Sorrows, the iconic devotional image. The theme of spiritual vision is driven home as we are compelled to view the world through the eyes of God, the omniscient ever present witness,¹¹¹ and respond to Christ’s gaze as He looks into us. God as witness mirrors the vices of mankind, the eye of Bosch’s God mirrors a faithful reflection of our sinful soul, as we are reflected in the eye of an interlocutor, our spiritual self reflected in His only Son.¹¹² It is a form of moral instruction.¹¹³ Just as a single, all-seeing, unblinking eye, looked at for any length of time can be very sinister, this open eye is not only an injunction to stay wide-awake to sin, but also an exhortation to remain ready to be awakened to a new and clearer vision of God’s world.

The uneven quality of the Madrid ‘tabletop’ should not distract us from its purpose. It was challenging the viewer just as the complex and contradictory relationship between the visual arts and inner spiritual vision towards the end of the Middle Ages is a particular challenge to us.¹¹⁴

“Art requires the long look.”¹¹⁵ The work of Bosch and Bruegel is layered and webbed with references to our inner and outer worlds that are not merely iconic. It can acquire a spiritual aspect, which arises from its power to evoke contemplation, to see more than there is on the surface of the picture. Devotional images by Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden and their followers have all been seen as not only endorsing prayer, meditation and contemplation of things far beyond what is visible, in order to elicit visions of a genuine Christian presence within the viewer. What should we think? It has been suggested “how easily we believe the concoctions of our own mind when facing the phantasms of Bosch and his imitators – and follow our own imagination rather than that of the artist.”¹¹⁶

Fine art is infinitely more than a set of signs awaiting deconstruction. Falkenburg has long argued for the notion of ‘speculative vision’ with regards the work of Bosch; that late-medieval writing within the context of the *devotio moderna* testify to the notion of inner vision illuminating the mind, taking visible form, and ‘seeing’ traces of God in the world. Within the context of late-medieval devotional imagery and its interpretation this point of view denies Bosch a ‘pessimistic world view’ and ties his work firmly to the visionary performances of the ‘desert fathers’.

‘The long look’, mental reflection of ourselves, and ‘speculative vision’ require concentration and connections, time for concentration in order to draw attention to things we might otherwise miss, and then knowledge to make biblical connections within which lies the devotional meaning. It can be reduced to that. God as witness mirrors the vices of mankind, the eye of Bosch’s God mirrors a faithful reflection of our sinful soul.

But always you need an audience.¹¹⁷



28, 29 Jheronimus Bosch *The Mass of St Gregory* and *The Adoration of the Magi* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Redemptions

A laissez-passer to the afterlife?

“The most radical thing a work of art can do is make you aware of the reality of something” Tobias Wolff¹¹⁸

“... atque animum pictura pascit inani, multa gemens, largoque umectat flumine voltum” Virgil¹¹⁹

BOSCH included further scenes of the Passion elsewhere. In the grisaille on the shutters to the *The Adoration of the Magi* the Man of Sorrows stares down confirming His presence in the Eucharist at *The Mass of St Gregory* – if seeing is believing, a vision that should dispel our doubts.¹²⁰ Whilst the inside of the triptych is entirely conventional, with kneeling patrons flanking a central devotional image, and no progression of mankind from left wing to right towards damnation or salvation that we might expect with Bosch, all is not straightforward. Here, the continuous rolling landscape looks towards Jerusalem, just eight kilometres away to the north-east. There are none of the signature monsters but a sense of menace there most certainly is, and a small number of scenes of impending violence are dotted around, armies are massed, wolves are hunting, the world is closing in, and it is evil. Evil was omnipresent from the start. We are privileged to see all this as Joseph seems to skulk away from the action, looking over his shoulder to where shepherds surreptitiously peer in and the Magi display a dutiful, conventional but arguably insincere reverence.¹²¹ The equivocal three wise men, Kings from the east bearing gifts, appear to have more in common with a bizarre observer. A scene that would traditionally have been about love and hope appears insidiously menacing with a creeping sense of evil, as an eccentric crown-of-thorns-decorated turban-crowned, half-naked figure with a leg wound and an ecstatic gaze lurks in the doorway of the ruined *chaumière à colomage*, the most creepy of all. If salvation has arrived in the world, it welcomes an unusual array of guests, together with some quaint shepherds perched on the roof.

Wounds indicate evil in Bosch, this one resembles a relic in its shrine. Perhaps it is a false messiah, an Antichrist, or the Jewish Messiah who was expected to appear as a manacled leper?¹²² Salvation is at hand, but as ever, evil is waiting to strike. The presence of a black King Caspar is remarkable.¹²³ His outfit and that of his attendant are disturbing with their embroidered trim of hybrid monsters and demons.¹²⁴ Taken with the perverted parody of Christ himself, the fey figure wrapped around the doorpost, there is a threatening background of evil to poison the soul of the true believer.

A seated Mary, with the pose of a Queen of Heaven but without the magnificence, and the Christ child presented like the Host to kneeling worshippers, are set independently and could be objects of devotion when the audience might genuflect before them.¹²⁵ Mary is both throne and altar. With the adoration of the wise men performing the divine service, the scene “take[s] on the character of a liturgical act, in which the donors and their patron saints are taking part”.¹²⁶

A humble mother, a helpless child, divinity that is “rare, simple, and reserved”,¹²⁷ they do not “impress themselves upon our minds”¹²⁸ while evil is manifold, spectacular, and aggressive – the Magi appearing hostile, Brand Philip going so far as to suggest they are victims of the Antichrist, the legendary leaders who will shortly be leading the exodus of all the nations, as their armies prepare for the final battle above the stable. We are faced with a scene that at one extreme has been interpreted as gaining “the symbolic significance of the eternally-repeated celebration of the sacred sacrifice”, and at the other, the end of the world is fast approaching.¹²⁹

This is an image of a true Christian believer, for whom the Mass is a continuous act of

renewal. But redemption through that sacrifice, and its celebration is a guarantee of nothing.

Certainly it is not a *laissez-passer* to the afterlife. People had been looking for a safe-passage, one-way only, one-time-use document to secure an exit from the war zone that they saw about to engulf the earth, but God was not about to recognise refugees from a reality for which they were themselves responsible. Belief in transubstantiation at the sacrifice of the Mass on the shutters, belief in the historical truth of the Son of God who became the Son of Man, an incarnation that did not involve any subtraction of deity, it is Christ's sacrifice that lies at the heart of this, both on the Cross and celebrated in the Mass.¹³⁰

The depiction of Christ across the edges of the closed shutters has forced some to question the integrity of the artist's beliefs, the crucifixion being split down the middle. Does this have to mean something? Is it a test of faith? The split runs on through the heart of the Man of Sorrows in Gregory's vision and down beside the chalice and the Pope's praying hands, highlighted all the more by being painted on the raised moulding that frames the painted shutters. Christ crucified all but disappears in the crack between the shutters; he reappears in the vision beneath, and is beside us in the chalice. As the host is broken by the priest, Christ is broken on the Cross, so the direct relationship between the Mass and the body of Christ is reinforced, and then visually connected to the interior with the offertory's link to the three kings bearing gifts for the Christ child. Heaven and earth are united through Christ in the Eucharist: Crucifixion, Resurrection, Salvation.

"It is a moral lesson in the guise of a religious vision."¹³¹ An arch¹³² over the altar displays a number of scenes of Christ's Passion,¹³³ "dashed off with sublime subtlety and fluid ease" – fluid ease maybe, sublime we may grant, but dashed off?¹³⁴ Far from being a border frieze, these scenes have come to life as a part of the vision, Calvary, that "green hill far away without the city walls" has become a mount of vice, emblematic of the evil in the world, and seen as an extension of the 'demonic gang' inhabiting the inner central panel by Brand Philip who has linked them to the Seven Deadly Sins.¹³⁵

One of the two thieves is on a ladder, climbing a cross to his own destiny, the second thief is under guard while two men are still struggling up the hill under the weight of his cross, whilst a man is to be seen hanging from a broken tree below where we might anticipate the third cross being erected. The suicide may be Judas.¹³⁶ Emphasis on the Passion and constant dwelling on the suffering of Christ made worshippers turn on those who were to blame, the Jews. Non-Jews had killed a potential Jewish leader but it was a Jew who betrayed Him. Augustine said that God had allowed the Jews to survive all their disasters as a warning to Christians, and that they would be converted *en masse* when He chose to bring the world to an end. However, the apostles of love became sons of thunder once again as they sustained hatred of Jews in medieval Europe, and portrayals of Judas become increasingly caricature-Jewish. The Passion of Christ was the result of the greatest evil; Bosch confronts us with the wicked world that he held responsible, with a hanging Judas symbolic of that evil. We have been warned. The meditation that such an image might provoke, Brand Philip saw as a "turning point in the history of Northern painting", something that "led very definitely to secular art".¹³⁷ If that was the result, and we should stress if, then it was surely an unintended consequence of Bosch expressing "a duality of the eternal and the ephemeral".¹³⁸

From inner vision to inner conflict – *Contritio et attritio* (penance and repentance)
*“We had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life.” Jack Kerouac *On the Road**

HUMAN EXISTENCE was seen as a pilgrimage, its point of reference mankind’s spiritual journey. This abetted audience involvement in art. Déguileville’s mystical alternative to an actual pilgrimage was just one of a number of incunabula that stressed the possibilities, and that may have proved the reference point for Bosch. That inner vision that Bosch sought to stimulate was not only matched by the artist’s image of St James making a real pilgrimage to Santiago on an outer wing of the Vienna *Last Judgement*, and a small number of pilgrims left centre foreground of the *The Haywain*, but also by his paintings of Everyman, portrayed as a pious itinerant struggling through his existence with just a wicker basket backpack, a stick and a knife, and demonstrating the inner conflict of a ‘pilgrim of life’.¹³⁹

The pilgrimage of Everyman was a popular literary theme of the time that implied rather than showed directly acedia or sloth, leading to neglect of religious obligations as “the vice that makes mankind most susceptible to the Devil” and “the weakness that can be blamed for one’s lack of fortitude to resist evil”.¹⁴⁰ It was the only one of the Seven Deadly Sins that was not identified with pursuit of worldly vanities, the seminal vice making one susceptible to all the others. Christian pilgrim, Everyman, pedlar, wayfarer, or even most unlikely of all, the Prodigal Son,¹⁴¹ this striking image split across a pair of closed shutters outside *The Haywain* triptych in the Prado, has its echo in Rotterdam, ‘mirrors of human salvation’ on the road to a better life. The highwaymen in the Prado version may well be symbolic of those who would rob the human soul of its spiritual riches.¹⁴²

Bosch’s itinerant vagabond is a wayfarer, a poverty-stricken¹⁴³ Everyman,¹⁴⁴ perhaps a repentant sinner at one of life’s crossroads turning his back on excess, still looking over his shoulder at the past, vulnerable, tempted by what he has renounced, scared by what lies ahead. Along with carrying a few small goods for sale, he may carry his ‘burden of sins’ on his back. The path ahead is narrow; a cracked bridge without sound footings symbolic of the difficulties faced by sinful man, a ‘bridge of judgement perhaps’, certainly it is a frail bridge to cross such a great distance, and behind, a vicious red headed spike-collared dog and highwaymen temper any enthusiasm for going back.¹⁴⁵

The landscape is continuous across the division in the Prado panels, and the picture unified by the visual connections bridging the two, between crime and its consequences (the robbers and the gallows), happiness counterbalanced by misery (the dancing couple as opposed to carrion crows picking over death and decay), the inner conflict of the wanderer on his pilgrimage through life, walking on and looking back.¹⁴⁶ The Eucharistic symbolism of a journey celebrated as God accompanies us to the promised land of the eternal banquet is clear, with the additional factor that the journey to Paradise as an image of confession seems to have gained wide currency in the 13th and 14th centuries.¹⁴⁷

The association of a journey to Paradise with the pilgrimage of life was widespread. Based on the three day journey from Exodus¹⁴⁸ – interpreted as three elements of the sacrament of penance: contrition, confession, and satisfaction,¹⁴⁹ essential aspects comparable to the ladder of three rungs Jacob saw ascending to Heaven.¹⁵⁰ Sometimes a fourth was added, perseverance.¹⁵¹

As with any triptych, the significance of this scene is that it should be considered before the shutters are opened. A close link between the closed exterior of *The Haywain* and the triptych has been argued against – although here there is no problem with this. If it is a sermon against covetousness, and perhaps even the secular application of a religious moral lesson, even an allegory of bad government has been suggested, as a series of devils pull the carnival float of a cart in the direction of Hell, the warning to turn away from this scene of apparent frivolity



30 Jheronimus Bosch *The Wayfarer*
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen



31 Jheronimus Bosch *The Wayfarer* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



32 Jheronimus Bosch *The Haywain* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

is clear enough. Set before a rolling landscape, the road to ungodliness is open, the pursuit of wealth and sinful follies is an easy one to take, while above, in an echo of Augustine, evil enters the world from the outset of the Creation, God in Heaven surveys the angels as they wrestle their rebel counterparts in a sequence leading directly to the Expulsion from Paradise. Mankind has always had to choose between good and evil. Outside, the pilgrim has made his choice but he cannot help looking back to consider what might have been. Going forward, one man with his backpack of straw evolves into humanity grasping at straws.

Eric de Bruyn put forward the idea that, as with the Prado *Pedlar*, the Rotterdam figure was in fact also painted across the outer panels of a triptych, “man as a repentant sinner who in the face of death turns his back on the sinful, vain world in exemplary fashion” the inside of which conveys “sinful human beings who since the Fall have indulged in worldly vanities and are receiving due punishment in hell” an idea shown to be more than credible by the dendrochronological examination of Peter Klein.¹⁵² There is a strong likelihood that *The Ship of Fools* in the Louvre, the *Allegory of Gluttony* fragment in New Haven, and *Death and the Miser* in the National Gallery in Washington comprised the inside panels of a triptych that when closed showed the Rotterdam *Pedlar*; as de Bruyn puts it “World, Flesh and Devil” was the likely programme.¹⁵³ (See illustrations 45-47.)

The horizon, nature’s visual pretence at a boundary, recedes inexhaustibly before the advancing traveller and continually opens new vistas to him. It is always there. Calling us onward but never allowing us to get beyond it is one of nature’s magic tricks, the roundness of the world leads the voyager back to where he came from, in psychological terms, back to himself. We cannot, after all, travel beyond ourselves. The freedom of the open road is ultimately an illusion, the barriers in our lives insurmountable if more subtle than those of geography and frontiers. The pilgrim’s knapsack holds all the preconceptions, fears, prejudices, dreams and inhibitions of his age, and we can only surmise at the contents. The odyssey of Bosch’s *Pedlar*-*Wayfarer*-*Christian*-*Everyman*-*Pilgrim* travels back to the earliest beginnings of the world as he sets off into the depths of his psychological odyssey. The spiritual journey is the frame of reference. The burden of his existence made bearable by attempting to live his life *Imitatio Christi*. The opening lines from the Thomas à Kempis book, published in 1505 take the words of St John: “he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life”¹⁵⁴ and the figure of Christ’s ‘resemblance to the Bosch characters is striking’.¹⁵⁵

For some, *The Pedlar* remains a mystery wrapped in an enigma wrapped in Jheronimus Bosch; he may or may not be a pilgrim, but who would reject the idea that, once bitten twice shy, he is nevertheless setting out again on the pilgrimage of life, an encouragement for the faithful as the artist attempts to awaken some reverence in them, walking in the footsteps of Christ?¹⁵⁶ Clearly, it is never too late to turn to Christ.

From a figure of Christ to the Christ Child

“And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me” St Paul to the Galatians 2:20

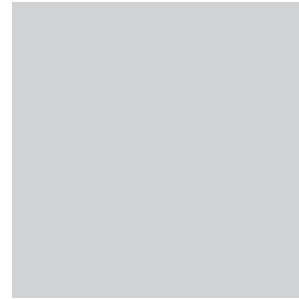
THE FRAGMENTARY nature of some of the work attributed to Bosch adds to the complications surrounding interpretation. However, the *Child with Walker and Whirligig*¹⁵⁷, sometimes referred to as *Christ Child with Whirligig*, despite disagreements as to the toddler's identity, is at least generally accepted to be one of the closed outer panels of a small triptych.¹⁵⁸ The walking frame the child uses has been likened to the infant Christ taking His first steps in *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. In the manuscript showing the ‘Holy Family at Work’ in the head miniature for the Saturday Hours of the Virgin, Joseph is working on a beam that resembles the wood of the Cross, similar to the cross-beam being squared on the orders of Solomon in the Friday Hours, ‘Measuring the Timber’.¹⁵⁹ The explanatory text within the first illustration is about the son offering himself to his mother as consolation: *Ego sum solacium tuum*. If this were the left hand outer panel, suggested by the direction of the child's movement, speculation as to the image that would appear on the opposite panel has ranged from another child to John the Baptist to the Virgin Mary. Would it to have had a similar blood-red ground? The question would hinge to some extent on what the child with the walker represented. Does the inscrutable child know who it is and where it is going? He certainly wears a very serious expression. What does he know that we do not? In the beginning is the end.¹⁶⁰ Is it the Christ child, childhood in general, or even mankind? Is it an innocent child stepping forth or the beginning of Christ's Passion as the child steps out towards destiny? Is the angle of the child's windmill (held like a lance, ready for a joust) the same as that of the Cross weighing Christ down on the reverse, and if so, what does it mean? As Christ is God, so a child is everyman, the hope of the world or the despair of God, the frailty of mortal flesh in need of help.

The disconnection between the front and back of the panel is bizarre. An innocent child engages our attention in solitary simplicity. On the reverse side Christ does not look out at us. He concentrates on dragging his cross to Calvary through a human zoo whipping him on and baying for blood. Blood there certainly would be as Christ is shod in nailed blocks, a common enough torture depicted throughout the lifetime of Bosch that had its origins in 15th century Netherlands. From stepping out into the world as a child to the last agonising steps towards the next, does this amount to theological symmetry? Are we faced with innocence and destiny on one side, worldly experience before redemptive destiny on the other? If Christians walk in the footsteps of Christ, then here is the flesh and the blood. The one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Lamb of God struggles towards the New Jerusalem. The outside of a triptych announces the inside. A vulnerable child struggles to walk, a pathetic Christ drags his final burden towards victory, the child's windmill a Netherlandish metaphor for the Cross, its lance perhaps the folly of sinners.

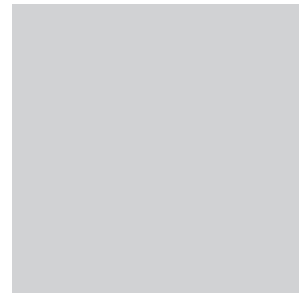
“When I became a man, I put away childish things.”¹⁶¹ The content of the rest of the triptych is unclear. No one has suggested a detailed reconstruction. However, what we can see is as involving for the congregation as the other images of *Christ Carrying the Cross*. The difference here is that Christ does not address us directly. He does not have to. Here we are made to feel emotionally complicit in mankind's guilt simply by being faced with the cruelty of the mob. Out of ignorance the audience is forced to confront its guilt, “face to face”, and its folly at not understanding “the meaning of Christ's suffering”.¹⁶² The insertion of the everyday vernacular into artistic representations of scripture was accepted, even encouraged to the point of being inescapable. The material world had a sacred purpose. Sacred mystery and the realm we know became progressively united. Cold realism is here in the treatment of the two thieves, one with



33, 34 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *Christ Child with Whirligig*
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

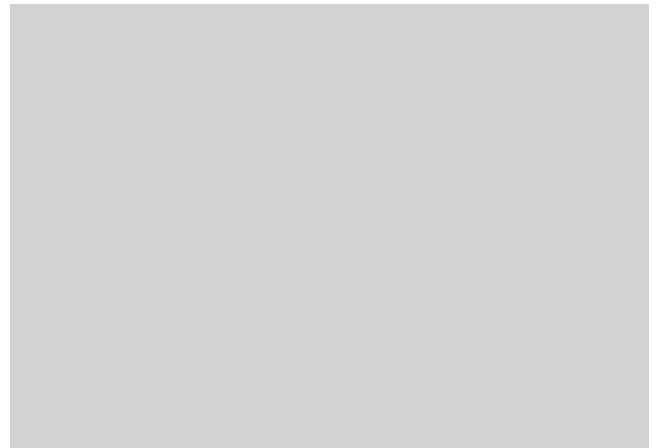
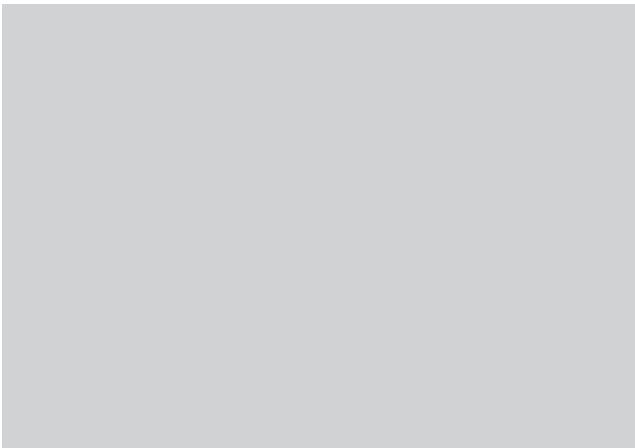


'Measuring the Timber'
Ms M917 p105



'Holy Family at Work'
Ms M917 p149

35, 36 *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*



37, 38 *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* Ms M917 pp104-105 *Solomon Observing the Measuring of the Timber*
(Friday Hours of the Compassion of God: None) and pp148-149 *The Holy Family at Work*
(Saturday Hours of the Virgin: Sext) courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum, New York

a bored priest stifling a yawn as he listens to him confess, and the other has abandoned all hope as a soldier confronts him.

Christ the child was closely related to the image of Christ in the host. It came to inhabit a central position in the symbolism of the Eucharist: the child, viewed, chewed, adored, sacrificed, brought together the presence of a real, suffering body, a historic 'Christ born of the Virgin', and the idea of redemption through sacrifice. "A link between the sacrifice of a child and the institution of the Mass appeared as early as a 13th century psalter where a chalice and a child Christ are laid on the table at which Christ and the Apostles were seated for their Last Supper."¹⁶³

Belief in the transubstantiated host as the real Christ, and in one of his suffering personas as a sacrificed child, meant that the horrific idea of a violently suffering baby was

tolerated without question. Eucharistic imagery never overwhelmed *Books of Hours* but it was a growing presence on their pages. But in the recesses of the books, the aspect of Christ's body most developed for private use was that of the suffering Christ, the Crucifixion, the bleeding flesh of the Passion. Increasingly gory images of the Crucifixion were accepted. Devotion to the wounds and the suffering of a man was the image most amenable to personal identification and through its association, the Eucharist. His wounds were revealed only to the most chosen such as Catherine of Siena (whose pickled head it is still possible to view) or Julian of Norwich, mystics seeing them as an 'entry into Christ', a 'refuge' according to Thomas à Kempis writing of "escape into Jesus' precious wounds and stigmata".¹⁶⁴

The pessimism that pervades the Middle Ages gorged on this as it was attracted to the apparent pessimism of Bosch in its headlong rush to damnation. This is in direct contrast with the Italian Renaissance where, as it became more naturalistic than medieval art, exhibited an increased reticence in the depiction of human suffering, especially that of Christ during the Passion, His blood and wounds being no longer tolerated without distaste and discomfort. People became more sensitive. These things swing with fashion. In the 9th century when the Crucifixion became a major subject of Christian art, a gory death was unpalatable. In the 6th century Christ on the Cross was shown alive with eyes wide open, in triumph, an image that returned to popularity in the 11th and 12th centuries in Tuscany. The rise in popularity of self-flagellation meant it made spiritual as well as medical sense to soft-pedal the suffering. A balance of suffering and serenity became the norm.

Redemption was in the struggle

"To start living in the present we have to redeem our past. And the only way we can redeem our past is by suffering and by giving ourselves over to exceptional labour, to steadfast and endless labour. You must understand that." Anton Chekhov¹⁶⁵

BY THE TIME Bosch painted the *Lisbon Triptych* his message was "far from pessimistic".¹⁶⁶ Provided you do not yield to temptation, Christ will rescue you and mankind by his suffering and death; the inner demons and the associated conflict of St Antony are there as a parallel to encourage our struggle with the Devil. Antony leads us towards the crucifix inside, the outer wings displaying two scenes: Christ's Arrest and Carrying the Cross, led De Tolnay to point out how the Passion brought salvation and potential redemption of sinners giving sinful mankind something to contemplate.¹⁶⁷ Antony's head is dead centre of the central panel. And his focus is on encouraging us towards contemplation of a small scene – the crucifixion. Amidst a sea of evil, and burning temptations, we are directed by Antony's hand raised in benediction to contemplate Jesus on the Cross. Antony is kneeling, thus suggesting to us that by praying to Jesus we might be saved.¹⁶⁸ Antony was steadfast when confronted by the Devil, if only we follow his example, and would mediate between us and God. Whether this painting is a display of the urges that Antony rejected, or the potential vices open to mankind that with Antony's help we might resist, or a topical warning against the hysteria surrounding witchcraft with a black mass being celebrated in the central panel – whatever the driving force, the demons are again unleashed.¹⁶⁹

The works of Bosch featuring St Antony are testament to the saint's importance during the artist's lifetime. The resolve of St Antony in the face of temptation was a demonstration of how a man alone could triumph given divine support. That support has to be prayed for and earned. The struggle itself was redemption, and in particular the temptations of the flesh versus striving for salvation.¹⁷⁰

*"His belief became art, which in turn became faith. The art became a prayer."*¹⁷¹

Two Medieval artists at the dawn of the Renaissance

“See! And confess, one comfort still must rise, ‘Tis this: Though man’s a fool, yet God is wise”

Alexander Pope¹⁷²

ART HISTORY does not start and stop at chronological boundaries any more than it acknowledges geographic ones. Panofsky has been censured for his myopia in seeing Renaissance art as a “reintegration of classical themes with classical motifs” – dominated by Italy. Whereas in the north, a debt to the classical past could also be demonstrated by the wish to educate and inform by displaying “the underside of classical art, the ungainly and grotesque, the imagery of daily life, and ancient genres such as satire and comedy that expose the folly of the world”.¹⁷³ The view from Italy was positive: “In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness such things as may cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill.”¹⁷⁴ North and south, art went in different directions, as did the labels historians hung on the period. Huizinga saw northern Europe in decline – the last gasp of the Gothic world, Burckhardt saw a great age in the south. There was a renaissance both north and south, they were distinct, but they were also the same.

The gate through which the Renaissance swung was labelled discovery. Jules Michelet, the ‘Victor Hugo of history’, characterised the period as ‘the discovery of the world, the discovery of man’ as an age of exploration dawned.¹⁷⁵ It was also a story of freedom, newly emancipated Europeans, their struggle for freedom of worship, coupled with advances in science and technology bringing greater freedom to communicate. The notion of mere revival was inadequate. Huizinga may have written a riposte to Burckhardt, positing decay rather than rebirth, yet the Swiss theologian’s defining features of the new age would suffice just as well for the north: “the development of the individual, the revival of antiquity, the discovery of the world and of man, morality and religion”, to which one might add Gombrich’s view, the idea of a period’s cultural unity.

For Burckhardt the humanists “are the most striking examples and victims of an unbridled subjectivity”; he wrote of the medieval condition as a “veil woven of faith, [and] illusion”, and that with newfound self-awareness “man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such” – whereas Huizinga saw the private sphere in the Middle Ages as virtually non-existent. Thinking in images was characteristic of the period to him, part of a symbolic code that was generally understood. The rituals and symbols expressive of religious and chivalric life, the hierarchy of symbolic meaning, the masks worn by different ages and by which identity may be established. In his evocation of an autumnal medieval world he understood that it was necessary not only to appreciate the essential factors responsible for transforming it, but also its illusions.

Bosch and Bruegel present that world of illusions, while there is no containing their contradictions. There was little to be optimistic about for either of them. And yet, as we shall see, they had their dreams and expectations, and as “hope springs eternal in the human breast” so they dwelt at length, and in detail, on another part of that quotation from Alexander Pope, as each “rests and expatiates in a life to come”. Through it all as they expound, elaborate, and enlarge upon their themes, a streak of optimism shines through.

And if it is difficult for some to consider Bruegel as medieval, then he is, at best, a transitional character from an era of cultural transition, one where individualism and competitiveness were being germinated from the seeds of a new form of society struggling to establish itself.

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, The proper study of mankind is Man"
Alexander Pope

Before 1500 civilisation was essentially based on the sea. After 1500 direct sea contact was established between continents, and the world stood on the eve of European expansion. At the same time there was an artistic sea-change, with the scale and range of artistic activity expanding fast. The demand for images increased as the emphasis on the visual became intense and widespread, from the desire for commemoration and the needs of salvation to private ownership of art, all of which grew quickly beyond the Church and enlightened patronage by the nobility across a broad new cross-section of society, a market in part fuelled by artistic invention and technical mastery of engraved metal plates that delivered reasonably priced religious pictures. But just as the speed of European expansion should not be exaggerated and, for all its thrusting novelty, European society was still essentially agricultural, something that would remain the case for 300 years – so the artistic tide was turning.

For over a century the Burgundian Netherlands had been Europe's dominant force in terms of artistic output and influence. That was ending. The centre of influence in international art was swinging south to the city-states of the Italian peninsula, just as the market for commerce swung in the opposite direction, and with it, the production of art for the market.

Venice, the Republic of commerce, was at its height during the lifetime of Bosch. In 1500 its population was around 100,000. There was nowhere in northern Europe to match it. At its peak, in the 1560s the population had reached 180,000, and there were 10,000 gondolas to transport them.¹⁷⁶ The genius of the Venetian state lay in commerce and industry. Trade was in its blood; it was the first capitalist economy. "The merchant of Venice was the master of Venice."¹⁷⁷ But during the lifetime of Bruegel it had already begun its decline. The Netherlands would in future be the hinge on which a gradual but decisive shift in commercial power hung. Its shipbuilders, merchants and manufacturers would consistently maintain the leading position. Bruegel reflected the rise of the new centre of capitalism in the subject matter of his printmaking. His biting imagery offered "a prescient vision of the artist's new status within the commercial networks of capitalism – art for sale."¹⁷⁸ It was the beginning of commercial art.

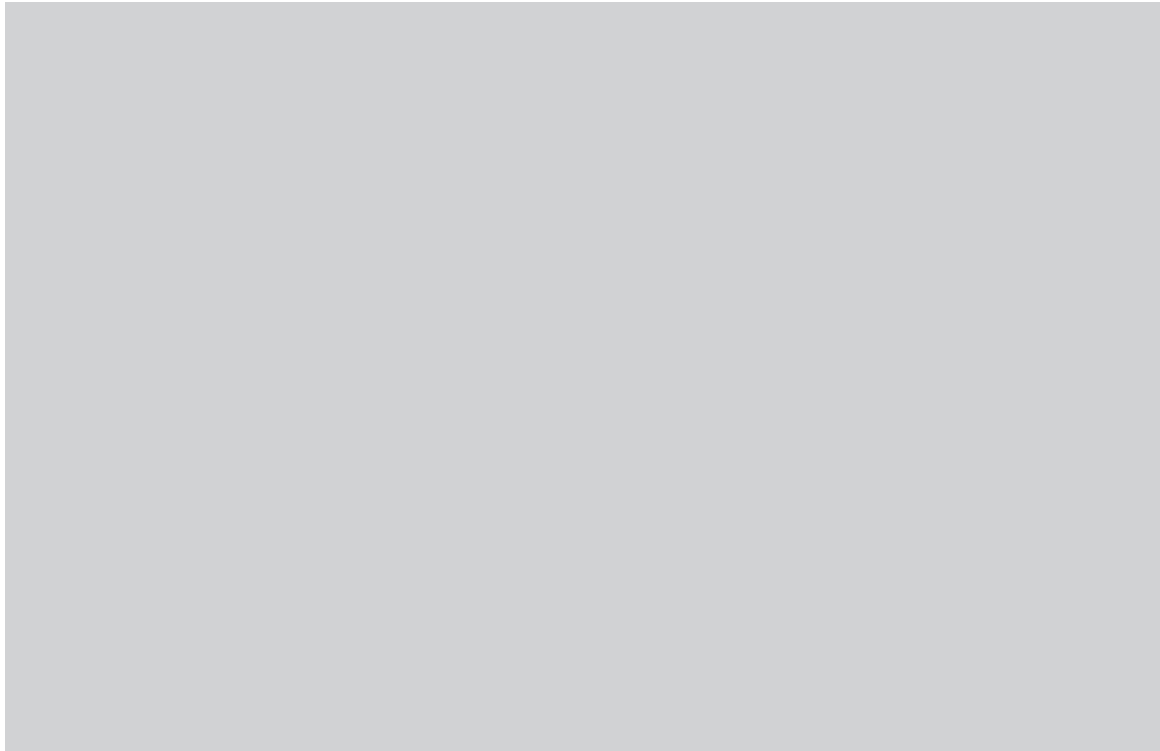
In the lifetime of Bosch, 700 ships a day set sail from Bruges. This figure is doubtless medieval exaggeration, nevertheless, it had become 'one of the greatest markets in the world'.¹⁷⁹ It was the place to be if you wanted to do business.¹⁸⁰ Philip the Good considered it "... the most renowned in all the world by dint of the merchandise that can be found here".¹⁸¹ By the time of Bruegel, ships had become significantly larger, too large to enter the Bruges ship channel to the sea, which, as a result of less maintenance, had silted up. After 1501 Portuguese spice ships had begun to transform the fortunes of Antwerp, whose merchants were set to become the new masters of commerce as the centre of gravity of European trade permanently shifted north. The art market and gallery had existed in the city since 1460 but when a new Bourse opened in 1531 the first official open art market was located next door – art followed the money. The art and business communities became inextricably linked. Antwerp's population grew from 40,000 at the turn of the 16th century to around 100,000 in 1560, only to enter a cycle of boom and bust as a result of war and political catastrophe, the Dutch Revolt, the Spanish Fury, and the siege of the city, all resulting in waves of religious, political, and artistic exiles.

The God of Trade faced the figure of Negotiation on the richly ornamental triumphal Gate of Honour built in 1549 for the future Philip II, the last in a cycle of grand entries organised by Charles V to present his only son to his subjects that had begun in Genoa over a year before. The Landjuweel arts festival of 1561 focused as its theme on "those brave spirits, merchants who justly trade".¹⁸² By 1567 over 300 artists worked in the city, twice the number of bakers.¹⁸³ Yet in the 15th century commentaries on northern art were exclusively Italian: Fazio

(1456), Florio (1477), Santi (1482), and d’Ancona (1449), and they were generally very positive about it. But it is the comment written in the 1540s by a Portuguese artist Francesco de Holanda (1517-1584) that caused recurrent misunderstanding: “In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness”.¹⁸⁴ The work of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden was so technically skilful that it appeared to be just that – exact, when it was not real, and contrived as any. The apparent fidelity to nature would lead to so many wrong assumptions.

Artists mirror their age; yet still, as with Bosch, so with Bruegel: love of the old world and the new caused everyone to overlook Christ in Heaven. The difference is that with Bosch we are on the outside looking into ourselves, with Bruegel at the start of a new age, we are always part of the action, the parade does not pass us by, we are in the line-up. This is our moment, new questions are being asked, and we must find the answers. The audience may not entirely embrace the ideas that are on display, they may not be amused, they may not appreciate looking at a sermon in paint, but the demand for his work would be testament to its popularity.¹⁸⁵

With them both, the results leap out of the darkness of the past, pulsating with life.



- 1 E H Carr patronisingly argued that all historians were confined within the limits of society from which they came.
- 2 Michael Ann Holly *Panofsky and Foundations of Art History* 1984 pp25-6
- 3 *ibid* p26
- 4 Heinrich Wölfflin *Principles of Art History* transl M D Hottinger 1929
- 5 Raymond Chandler *The Simple Art of Murder* 1950
- 6 J(h)eronimus, Jeroen, Joen or Jonen; Jeronimus gezegd Joen, Jeronimus Van aeken, Jheronimus van Aken, styling himself Jheronimus Bosch, son of Anthonius die maelre, all link 15th century popularity of St Jerome with his home town of 's-Hertogenbosch (one of the four major cities of the Duchy of Brabant after 1450) rather than the family's roots in Aachen that would have caused confusion. His grandfather, Jan, moved from Nijmegen to 's-Hertogenbosch around 1425. He had five sons: Thomas, Jan, Hubertus, Goessen, and Anthonius, Bosch's father; they were all painters. Uncle Jan was an apprentice in Bruges where he became a citizen in 1430, and like Bosch's grandfather became a Master. Jheronimus trained with his father and continued to run the family workshop with his brothers Goessen and Jan after their father died when Bosch was about 27. (On his mother's side, Aleid van der Mynnen came from humble small town origins. Her father was a tailor, Bartholomeus van der Mynnen, who had several illegitimate children, including Aleid, by different women, before marrying a prosperous woman, Agnes van Hyntham.) For archival research on the family see L van Dijk 'Jheronimus Bosch inspired by People in his Environment: Research from the archival sources' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources. 2nd International Jheronimus Bosch Conference 2007* ed De Bruyn & Koldeweij 2010 pp112-122. The elusive life of Pieter Bruegel begins with the search for his birthplace ("a dispute" of minor importance" – Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p15) and the assumption that it is the clue to his name: Breughel (formerly Broeghel, and later Bruegel), Breda, Brogel (Grote or Kleine), and Brée (which also appears as Breda and Breda) have all been suggested, and each have their champion, whilst he later began his career and made his reputation in Antwerp. The demarcation line between the Duchy of Brabant and the Prince-Bishopric of Liège further complicates the issue, a 'northern' or a 'southern' town, Brabant or Limbourg, the Netherlands or Belgium" or was he simply the son of a Brueghel, as suggested by Grossmann. The Florentine Guicciardini who was established in Antwerp called him "Pietro Brueghel di Breda" *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania Inferiore* 1567 fol99. Manfred Sellink suggested the Guild listing of 'Brueghels' was a patronymic rather than a toponym Bruegel 2007 p10.
- 7 In *Christ Mocked* at the Escorial, in a disputed picture in Philadelphia *The Adoration of the Magi*, *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Vienna, *The Tribulation of Saint Antony* in Lisbon, *The Pedlar* in Rotterdam, *The Conjuror* in St-Germain-en-Laye, and as many as three potential candidates have been identified in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. It has also been argued that Giorgione painted him c1507 as one of *The Three Philosophers* set between himself and Leonardo, whom he met in Venice in 1500. (The attribution is disputed: it is more likely Giorgione began but did not complete the work.)
- 8 An Oscar Wilde comment, to which we could add Groucho Marx's quip, "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll make an exception" or George Orwell's "at 50 everyone has the face he deserves".
- 9 The compendium *Recueil d'Arras* includes facsimile portraits: folio 275 is captioned 'Jeronimus Bos painctre'. This may be taken from a self-portrait or a portrait by a contemporary: we do not have the original. Albert Châtelet with Jacques Paviot *Visages d'antan. Le Recueil d'Arras (XIVe-XVle s.)* 2007. See also Jos Koldeweij 'Het 'Recueil d'Arras' – Portret 'Jeronimus Bos painctre' *Bossche bladen* 11/1 2009 pp21-24; Jos Koldeweij 'Boekbespreking' *Desipientia* 15/2 November 2008 pp42-43; G C M van Dijk 'Hieronymus van Aken / Hieronymus Bosch: His Life and 'Portraits' *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights Into His Life and Work* ed Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij 2001 p14
- 10 William Shakespeare *Macbeth* Act 1 scene 4 Duncan: "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face"
- 11 Jheronimus Bosch *The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ears* c1500 pen and brown ink 20.3x12.9cm Berlin Kupferstichkabinett
- 12 The date at which Bosch changed his name is a matter for conjecture based in part on the chronology of his paintings that continues to be largely a matter of opinion, together with his signature that may or may not be by his own hand, may well have been applied at a later date, and appears only on seven paintings generally deemed to be original. (Over 20 works bear the signature Bosch, and c1560 De Guevara cast doubt on Bosch signatures: *falsamente inscripto*, noting a pupil who signed the name.) Several paintings may in future be found to have 'lost' their signatures over the years, candidates for which include the *Flood* (after 1508) and *Pedlar* (after 1487) panels in Rotterdam, *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Vienna, *Visions of the Hereafter* in Venice (after 1484), and possibly *St Jerome* in Ghent (after 1476). None of the works are dated, and signatures such as that on the *Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins* in the Prado "looks too crude and too large" see Bernard Vermet in Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet *Hieronymus Bosch: the complete paintings and drawings* 2001 p93. As to the change of name, 1487 was suggested by Koldeweij following the artist's membership of the Confraternity of Our Lady whilst noting the brotherhood's accounts for 1498/9 recording one Jheronimus van Aken, and attendance at a Confraternity mass on 10 March 1510 where he signed in as Jheronimus Bosch; see Koldeweij *ibid* pp54-5, and the first written source for Bosch in 1504; see Koldeweij *ibid* p21; see also GCM van Dijk 'Hieronymus von Aken/Hieronymus Bosch: His Life and 'Portraits' *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights Into His Life and Work* ed Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij 2001 p10. Koldeweij links his belief in the earlier date for a change of name to the *St John on Patmos* panel in Berlin (that may be as early as 1489 but possibly as late as 1495) and the *Adoration of the Magi* in Madrid. The Bruges *Last Judgement* that may be as early as 1480 carries a signature, and with Vermet we place this much closer to Bosch than is usually the case. Again, the signature here may well have been added at a later date to increase its value, De Guevara's 'pupil' perhaps. Whilst the city of Bruges appears to have fostered defining authorship (Petrus Christus, Hans Memling), it was far more common in the 15th century for religious paintings *not* to bear a signature: Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes all never signed a picture. For more on the Bosch signature see chapter 4. (When in 2006 the Prado Museum acquired part of the renowned library of José de Madrazo (1781-1859) it was found to include the manuscript of Felipe de Guevara's *Commentary on Painting and Ancient Painters* – frequently referred to as the *Commentaries on Painting*. The 1948 translation of Guevara by Rafael Benet was the second edition of the Antonio Ponz version of 1788 that was erroneously believed to have been based on the original. Elena Vázquez Dueñas *Felipe de Guevara (c1500-1563) Biografía y análisis crítico de su Comentario de la pintura y pintores antiguos* 2011, and Elena Vázquez Dueñas *Bosch: More than just an inventor of monsters and chimeras. Felipe de Guevara and his Commentary on Painting and Ancient Painters* 2012 in which she concludes that the statement "by Felipe de Guevara, Ambrosio de Morales and Fray José de Sigüenza should be considered as Counter Reformation interpretations of Bosch's paintings that were intended to justify Bosch's paintings on display at the Catholic Court of Philip II.")
- 13 Sin is inside the man, the world is watching and listening – and it is the world, suggested by the curve of the earth on which the trees are standing, an unnatural scene enhanced by the symbolism of universal truths where the fields have eyes and the woods have ears. Matthijs IJlinsk *From Bosch to Bruegel: the disenchantment of the world* Lille talk 2013. For more on this drawing see Matthijs IJlinsk *Art and Identity. Three autonomous drawings by Jheronimus Bosch* at the Bosch Conference in 2007, speaking on the function of the drawings, and the artist's objective in doing them, subsequently published in *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn, Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp175-189. IJlinsk's dissertation in 2009 concerned the reception of Bosch's work, subsequently published as *Jheronimus Bosch. In Bosch en Bruegel als Bosch* 2010.
- 14 They have been interpreted as signifying "ill-fortune, doom and evil, death, the bird of darkness and of the Devil, heresy, human blindness, folly and stupidity, vice, eroticism and licentiousness,

experience and wisdom, the symbol of Saturn mockery, the solitude of the hermits,” etc., etc. See Marijnissen & Ruyffelaere *Bosch* 2007 p465

- 15 In the wood there are two huge ears and seven eyes planted in the immediate foreground of the drawing. The caption at the top (that may have been added by another hand at a later date) from a 13th century *De disciplina scholarium* reads “Miserrimi quipped est ingenii semper uti inventis et numquam inveniendis” – it is a poor spirit which only works with the inventions of others, and is unable to bring forth his own ideas. (Possibly better translated as ‘miserable / unfortunate is he who works only with the inventions of others and can think of nothing new himself.’) However, a 1546 engraving had the text *Dat Velt heft ogen / dat Wolt heft oren / Ick wil sien / swijghen ende booren* – The field has eyes / the Wood has ears / I will see / be silent and hear. A rebus that might be more simply interpreted as ‘silence is golden’. Criticised by Marijnissen, Otto Benesch and Patrik Reuterswärd translate the Latin differently, the last also seeing Bosch relating positively to the owl (the wise old owl) and referring to Psalm 102 “I am like an owl of the desert” which intrigues, apart from the fact that this version of the psalm is the King James version, whereas in the time of Bosch the nearest would be the Douay-Rheims and 101, the fifth penitential psalm: a prayer for one in affliction “I am become like a pelican in the wilderness: I am like a night raven in the house” – interpreted to mean I am become through grief like birds that affect solitude and darkness. Whilst ‘pelican’ has been variously translated as a hawk or a cormorant, but not ‘owl’, pelicans were believed to kill their young, then pierce themselves in the breast, their dripping blood bringing the chicks back to life. Hence the pelican was seen as symbolic of Christ who shed his blood to give eternal life to the children of mankind, and became a popular late medieval motif. The parental love of the pelican is illustrated in numerous breviaries, books of hours, and prayer books of the period.
- 16 *The Divine Comedy* vol 1 *Hell (The Inferno)* Canto I translated by Charles Eliot Norton 1999. *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / mi ritrovai per una selva oscura / ché la diritta via era smarrita* – rendered by Longfellow as “Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark / For the straightforward pathway had been lost.” Dante’s imagery “may be intentionally polyvalent here, the forest could represent degenerate Christendom, or a corrupt Florence rife with private and social vices.” David H Higgins *Dante: The Divine Comedy* 1993 p501. By setting his journey around the Easter of 1300 Dante could present his version of historical fact as prophecy. *The Divine Comedy* was written between c1308 and c1320. Dante died shortly after its completion in 1321.
- 17 From Botticelli to Robert Rauschenberg via Gustave Doré it has provoked artists to be particularly provocative.
- 18 Walter Benjamin ‘The Task of the Translator’ from an essay forming the introduction to his translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens* in *Illuminations* transl Harry Zohn 1968 p80. “It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work.”
- 19 David H Higgins *Dante: The Divine Comedy* 1993 p21. The author also notes the proximity of the Bible as a text in *The Divine Comedy* is referred to more times than Aristotle and Virgil combined.
- 20 Did Bosch have access to Dante? Michiels compared the work of Bosch to Dante (1845), Van Schelven also thought he was inspired by the poet (1937), Bax believes that “untenable” with regards the *Lisbon Triptych* but admits *Visions of the Hereafter* in Venice may be related (1949 p364), there are perhaps not quite as many views as there are authors but certainly many differences of opinion. However, the high numbers of monks and nuns within the boundaries of his home city (the local chronicler Cuperinus called it ‘a pious city’ with reference to the number of religious houses and confraternities; the *Fraterhuis* of the Brethren of the Common Life in particular was an intellectual centre) together with the guilds in the city, the Latin School on Kerkstraat where Erasmus studied from 1485-7 noting he was able to study several good writers, and the Confraternity of Our Lady of which Bosch was a member from 1486/7 (known as Swan Brothers after 1488), all of which would have had libraries, taken with the advent of printing in ‘s-Hertogenbosch in 1484 all point to the

possibility that Dante would have been available to the educated elite, and that by his various associations and connections Bosch would have had access to *The Divine Comedy*. The first headmaster of the school Simon Vander Couderberch (d1526) left part of his library to the Confraternity of which both he and Bosch were members. “It is plain from details of his work that he did not just use loose visual material, such as prints, for inspiration, but that he also drew on printed books and manuscripts.” Jos Koldewij ‘Hieronymus Bosch and his city’ *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete paintings and Drawings* 2001 p61. Today there are some 800 manuscript copies extant, over 80 prepared before the mid-14th century. First printed in Foligno in 1472 by Giovanni Neumeister with a run of around 200 of which 20 still exist, the widespread demand led to the almost simultaneous appearance of three versions the following year. The reported price for an unidentified incunabulum of Dante’s poem from the 1490s was listed as one ducat, a price beyond the reach of all but institutional buyers and wealthy individuals, in a city where four or five ducats per month was an adequate income and anything above ten ducats represented relative affluence. Production then followed in 1472 in Mantua and Venice, in 1477 and 1478-9 in Naples, again in Venice in 1477 and Milan in 1478. While the Neapolitan editions of 1477 and of Del Tuppo (1478-9) were based upon the Foligno edition, a commonly accepted version of the text was not established until the poem was accompanied by a commentary in the ninth version, the first Florentine edition of 1481, with 20 engravings by Baccio Baldini after designs by Botticelli, that appeared together with a completely new commentary authored by the most authoritative literary critic then teaching in Florence, Cristoforo Landino. In 1484, Ottaviano Scoto in Venice produced the most typographically elegant piece of printing, to be followed by the 1487 edition printed in Brescia by Bonino de’Bonini, considered the masterpiece of Brescian printing from the 15th century. It was only the second illustrated edition, and the first with woodcuts; there were 68 of them. In eight years of activity between June 1483 and the beginning of 1491, Bonini printed more than 40 editions, before resettling in Lyons in 1491. Dated 18 November 1491, one Pietro di Piasi produced an edition in Venice. On 3 March 1492 under the Benali/Codecà imprint another one appeared in Venice, which was to be reprinted on 29 November 1493 with three full-page woodcuts and 97 small vignettes. Matteo di Codecà da Parma then collaborated with Pietro Quarengi on the last 15th-century edition produced in 1497. (Other than the Foligno edition, the number of copies printed before 1500 was usually around 300. After the turn of the century it increased on average to 500.) In 1502, Aldus Manutius, the most celebrated printer and publisher of Renaissance Italy, produced what was to become the vulgate for the next 300 years, prepared by no less than the literary arbiter of the day, the Venetian humanist and courtier Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), well before he was painted by Titian (c1540) or becoming a Cardinal. Proper punctuation was introduced, the text’s abbreviations explained, and the words divided according to grammar, the whole thing based upon an authoritative 14th-century manuscript, originally a gift of Boccaccio’s to Petrarch, that had found its way into the formidable library of Bembo’s father, Bernardo. Bembo’s text was to become the basis for every subsequent edition of the *Divine Comedy* until the late 19th century. A glut of imitations followed, starting in Lyons in 1502, where Aldus’ copyrights were unenforceable. The Lyons printers Barthélemy Troth and his Italian partner Balthazar de Gabiano, were the greatest offenders. They reproduced complete but error-strewn crude imitations of the Aldine texts. Some 64 counterfeit editions of Aldine texts are estimated to have been published in Lyons between 1501-1527. Whilst the *Imitatio Christi* was available in Dutch from 1505, Dante was not available until the 19th century, but the question may be put: is it unreasonable to believe that, considering the popularity of the story, merchants did not take a copy or two with them to Burgundy and further north? See *University of Glasgow Incunabula Project*, an electronic catalogue, and *Renaissance Dante in Print* (1472-1629), an exhibition in 1996 from the John A Zahm CSC Dante Collection of 3,500 books at the University of Notre Dame and the Newberry Library of printed and manuscript sources from 1300 to 1800, Chicago. As to the work’s translation into Latin a clue may well be in when Dante began to write it. Peri refers to the question of when Dante commenced writing the *Commedia* as one of the foremost questions of Dante criticism, going on to say that there is “unimpeachable, unambiguous and explicit contemporary testimony” that the author wrote the first seven canti before he left Florence in the winter of 1301-2. Whilst many “scholars reject this

testimony... because it does not fit the accepted (but hypothetical) chronology of Dante's production" Peri contradicts "scholars of the greatest distinction" with reference to "Boccaccio, and of the numerous writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who tell the same story... first voiced in Florence when Dante's sons and some of his friends were still alive, and which then or for centuries to come nobody denounced as dubious or untrue." At the end of 1301 a notebook was discovered in a church that was in the poet's own handwriting and containing the first *canti*. Dante's reaction on being shown the fragment by a friend, Marchese Moroello Malaspina, was recorded by Boccaccio first in 1351 (in the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* – of which there are three versions and a complex compositional history) and later in 1353 (*Vita di Dante* – which is not only a 'life' but a 'treatise in praise of Dante'). Peri goes on to note that none of Boccaccio's observations were challenged by the 50 or so writers commenting on Dante in the 14th century, nor any of those in the next century, before going on to set out the various changes that occurred when Dante recommenced writing in 1307 or 8 and, almost in passing, notes that the earlier version was in Latin. Hiram Peri (Pflaum) 'The Original Plan of the Divine Comedy' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol 18, 3-4 July-December 1955 pp189-210. Controversial as this is because commentators adhere to the theory of influence on literary development that a journey through the medieval Catholic otherworld in the tripartite vernacular epic had, in 2004 Guyda Armstrong also wrote about the "Latin beginning... the so-called first attempt at the *Commedia* in Latin" of the poem as she compared and assessed various translations of 'Giovanni Boccaccio. Life of Dante. JG Nichols, trans.' *Heliotropia – an online journal of research to Boccaccio scholars* 2004 vol2 issue 2. The question remains as to precisely how much was written in Latin and the extent to which it may, if ever, have been circulated, whilst illustrated editions would have captured the imagination. In correspondence with the author, Paul van Heck, the Dante specialist in Leiden, confirmed the existence of 'the Latin version of Matteo Ronto and some French versions' but as to their availability to Bosch we do not know.

- 21 Nardo di Cione's *Inferno* in the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, painted 1354-7, was "the only major fresco of Hell which minutely followed Dante's programme in the *Divine Comedy*." Robert Hughes 1968 p159
- 22 The phrase used by WS Churchill on 1 October 1939 to describe Russia neatly sums up some of the comments made about Bosch, commentators constantly referring to him as an enigma, a riddle and a mystery.
- 23 James Snyder's introduction to *Bosch in Perspective* p1-2, 1973
- 24 "Who was Pieter Bruegel?" The question asked by Mark Meadow at the start of his introduction to 'Putting Bruegel in His Place: Contextual Studies of Pieter Bruegel the Elder' *NKJ* 1996 p7 is typical. Meadow's question has always been there: "Who is this new Hieronymus Bosch" asked Lampsonius in 1572 since when the idea of a search for the real man has been ever present, eg. Perez Zagorin 'Looking for Peter Bruegel' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64.1, 2003 pp73-96
- 25 Mark Meadow 'Putting Bruegel in His Place: Contextual Studies of Pieter Bruegel the Elder' *NKJ* 1996 p7
- 26 For an English text of Van Mander's three-page entry on Bruegel (translated by Michael Hoyle, Jacqueline Pennial-Boer and Charles Ford) – *The Life of Pieter Brueghel, Excellent Painter from Brueghel see Karel van Mander, The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603-1604)* ed Hessel Miedema, six volumes 1994-99 vol1 pp190-95. For an analysis with explanatory notes see vol3 pp252-67, for an outline of Bruegel's life see pp8-39, and p285 for a chronology. See http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/mand001schi01_01/mand001schi01_01_0221.php for the original text.
- 27 Max Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p40 "Bruegel had become famous by 1600. Van Mander sang his praises and more than once cited him as a model in his paean on the theory of art. But Bruegel's fame was based on something short of understanding... Not by a single word does the biographer indicate that he understood the unique nature of Bruegel."
- 28 Henning Mankell *The Fifth Woman* transl Steven T Murray 2003 p432
- 29 Daniel L Schacter has written extensively on the distortions of memory: *Searching for Memory: the brain, the mind and the past* 1996. And as Pat Barker wrote in *Regeneration* "I know it can't've been like that, but that's what I remember." Schacter describes the source confusions of memory, how our most cherished memories may never have happened, or happened to someone else; how old thoughts become reassembled with fresh implications; questions of autoplaiarism, cryptomnesia, the fabulations of fantasy, and memories of traumatic experiences which are defensively repressed, only to discover that when through therapy they are released, such descriptions may have been planted by others. From the Inquisition to the witches of Salem to the extreme interrogation techniques of today, 'confessions' have been extracted via memories implanted into the brain.
- 30 C P Snow *Corridors of Power* 1964 p188. Many more ideas along these lines could be added, eg in 1992 Gabriel Garcia Márquez *Strange Pilgrims* "True memories seemed like phantoms, while false memories were so convincing that they replaced reality."
- 31 "Death seems to have interrupted Brueghel's activity rather suddenly." Gustav Glück 'Peter Brueghel the Elder and Classical Antiquity' *Art Quarterly* 1943 p185
- 32 In the Antwerp Guild of St Luke *Liggeren* for 1551 'Peeter Brueghels, schilder' is listed as a master, meaning he must have been 21 years old. He was thus born between 1525 and 1530. Hélène Verougstraete and Roger Van Schoote 'The Triumph of Death by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Brueghel the Younger. Intellegitur plus semper quam pingitur' *Le Dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture. Colloque IX, 12-14 septembre 1991. Dessin sous-jacent et pratiques d'atelier* 1993 pp213-240 suggest 1526 because the date appears on a banner in a copy of the original. See also JB Bedaux and A van Gool 'Bruegel's birthyear, motive of an ars/natura transmutation' *Simiolus* 7/3 1974 pp133-56.
- 33 Shakespeare *Timon of Athens* Act 3 scene 1 "Every man has his fault, and honesty is his"
- 34 Shakespeare *As You Like It* Act2 scene 7
- 35 The phrase was André Malraux's description of De Gaulle. Malraux *Les Chênes qu'on abat* 1971 p166.
- 36 In the case of *waterverf* he had to. Glue size, or earth pigment bound with animal glue soluble in water, applied directly to sized canvas with no ground, dried very quickly, hence it had to be applied fast. You had to be expert to achieve the required effects which resulted in a matte and opaque finish. It required a loose brushstroke. Bruegel's speed of execution in general may be compared to that of Frans Floris who was criticised by Lampsonius for being "more inclined towards making many things than spending time on them".
- 37 Arguably, six paintings survive from the years 1557-1560, none from 1561, and 35 from the period 1562-1568. Around 61 drawings survive, 32 of which formed the basis of prints, probably a further 26 drawings for prints once existed, and 84 first edition prints are to be found at the Bibliothèque royale de Belgique. All the figures are debatable.
- 38 His black chalk drawings were made directly onto the ground on lead-white primer laying out the composition.
- 39 Bruegel's handling of paint was one of his most distinct achievements – hence Friedländer's comment. On wooden panels, identified mainly as Baltic Oak, the grain of the wood is frequently clear to the naked eye. The ground Bruegel used, chalk and animal glue, sometimes also shows through the subsequent layers and is left uncovered in some instances, hence it can look like a layer of paint, eg *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*. The ground was covered in lead-white again brushed on thinly, and again sometimes left without being over-painted. Van Mander referred to Bruegel's *zwadderende manier* of transgressing the relationship between surface and ground. When he worked in distemper on linen, the technique demanded speed,

- the linen ground clearly visible in some cases, eg *The Adoration of the Magi*. A coat of animal size was generally used prior to one or two layers of tempera. Paintings may well have been on canvas when the work was for export: the only two works in this technique universally accepted as by Bruegel, *The Misanthrope* and *The Blind Leading the Blind*, now both in Naples, were produced for Count Massi, an advisor to Alessandro Farnese in Parma. I am grateful to Odilia Bonebakker for making her presentation *Textile Transgressions: Bruegel and the Media* at the 2010 HNA conference in Amsterdam available to me. Based on the first half of her PhD thesis *Bruegel and the Ground of Painting* this looks in detail at methods of execution, demonstrating the connections between the artist's techniques and use of oil and watercolour.
- 40 Max Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p38
- 41 After Georges Hulin de Loo and René van Bastelaer's 1907 monograph on Pieter Bruegel the Elder (see chapter 9) there was an exhibition of the work of the Elder's two sons in 1934 at the Pieter de Boer gallery in Amsterdam that reignited their re-evaluation and rehabilitation; a monograph on Pieter Bruegel the Younger by Georges Marlier was published posthumously with the help of Jacqueline Folie in 1969, and an exhibition in Brussels of the work of the dynasty held in 1980. Klaus Ertz produced a catalogue raisonné of the Younger in 1998/2000 *Pieter Bruegel der Jüngere 1564-1637/38. Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, after curating major exhibitions of work by both the Elder's sons. The *Bruegel Enterprises* exhibition, catalogue, colloquium, and subsequent publications in 2001-2 organised by Peter van den Brink demonstrated among other things the workshop practice, copying methods, and production techniques of Pieter the Younger leading, to everyone's surprise, to a reassessment of the work of his father. The detective work was then taken up by Christina Currie and Dominique Allart culminating in their remarkable *The Bruegel/Hjel Phenomenon* in 2012, the authors acknowledging their debt to a multi-disciplinary team of conservator-restorers, art historians and scientists at The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) together with the partnership established by KIK-IRPA in 1993 between it and the Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België and Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique (KMSKB-MRBAB) and the University of Liège. Christina Currie's thesis *Technical Study of Paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Younger in Belgian Public Collections* (2003) was the first large-scale study linking the technical aspects of works by Bruegel the Elder to those of Pieter Bruegel the Younger.
- 42 The Bosch Research and Conservation Project initiated in 2009 by the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, the Noordbrabants Museum, the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center and the Jheronimus Bosch 500 Foundation, is an international research project aimed at documenting and studying the complete works of the artist at the highest level in preparation for the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the death of Bosch that will coincide with major exhibitions in the Netherlands and Spain, and publication of an extensive technical report.
- 43 Proust called the 1782 epistolary novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos *Les Liaisons dangereuses* "the most frighteningly perverse of books".
- 44 See chapter 3 to cross the 'miraculous threshold' of a triptych to its 'sacred interior'. Hence opening a triptych could bring a sense of revelation or epiphany. Throughout the Middle Ages both the Virgin Mary and Christ were described as doors. And today, in a letter to the church in Buenos Aires on the 'Year of Faith' written 1 October 2012, the Feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux, by the then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis wrote about Mary as threshold, the symbolism of the door, and 'crossing the threshold of the faith' with reference to the *Acts of the Apostles* 14:26-27 "they related what great things God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith" and 'the door to our heart' *Revelations* 3:20 "I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him"; how 'passing through the door of faith one crosses that threshold to the word of God' and when Jesus is at the door 'we allow Him to cross the threshold of our lives'.
- 45 Seamus Heaney *The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures 1989* "Poetry is more a threshold than a path, one constantly departed from, at which readers and writers undergo, in their different ways, the experience of being at the same time summoned and released"
- 46 "it is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without" is from Wallace Stevens, writing about the nobility of poetry in his 1941 essay *The Noble Rider and the Sounds of Words*.
- 47 Robert Frost *Directive from Steeple Bush* 1947 – a stanza-less block of iambic pentameter written (Frost quipped that 'writing free verse was like playing tennis without a net') about something the poet has lost: "if you'll let a guide direct you / Who only has at heart your getting lost" one must be "lost enough to find yourself" as the poet admits that nothing is going to fill his confusion and pain of knowing the evanescence of worldly things – there is no 'Grail' or at least he cannot find it. 'Beyond confusion' are the last words of the poem.
- 48 Charles Darwent writing on Tom Lubbock, art critic of the *Independent* who died of cancer in 2011.
- 49 Anita Brookner *Soundings* 1997 p85
- 50 Bronislaw Malinowski *The problem of meaning in primitive Languages* supplement I to C K Ogden and I A Richards *The Meaning of Meaning* 1923 pp296-336
- 51 Svetlana Alpers quotes the concluding sentence of TS Eliot *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in *The Vexations of Art* 2005 p237 in a digression on the question of tradition in art, and in particular the congruence between Velázquez and Manet.
- 52 St Augustine *City of God* Book XI ch21 "Neither does He see in one fashion by the eye, in another by the mind, for He is not composed of mind and body; nor does His present knowledge differ from that which it ever was or shall be, for those variations of time, past, present, and future, though they alter our knowledge, do not affect His, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
- 53 Emile Bernard 'Cézanne' *L'Occident* 6 July 1904 pp17-30 for a collection of 'Cézanne's Opinions'
- 54 "My interest is in experience which is wordless and silent, and in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in art which is also wordless and silent" – Agnes Martin, whose "ascetic, airy abstractions" were exhibited in both London and Cambridge in May 2010.
- 55 Hans Belting has argued the importance of "the bond between art and the public which makes use of it" in *The End of the History of Art*, and specifically Larry Silver 'the key to understanding [Bruegel] lies in the audience' *Bruegel* 2011 eg "the viewer is to discern the subject" p126 and "the question of Bruegel's relationship to audience, a debate about his intellectual ambitions and circle of associates" p231. Todd Richardson addressed what might be termed the social life of paintings with his 2007 thesis *Peter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* where he argued the convivial context and multiple viewpoints were encouraged for the purpose of good conversation as the audience might have brought a 'repertoire of references' – visual, literary and religious, to the act of looking, a theory he developed with specific reference to the 'later peasant paintings' with the imagery effectively becoming active participants in social events.
- 56 Asked about how he looked at a picture, the critic David Sylvester replied, "I don't have any sense that I have professional skills that I can resort to. The experience is instinctive. It's somewhere between prayer and sex." Sylvester also said that most people only spent a very short time looking at each picture. "I would say that the average is probably less than a minute. Michael Compton, when he was working at the Tate, computed that the average time that people spend in front of a picture was about three seconds." (The painter Howard Hodgkin called Sylvester "the only sacred monster who has ever existed in the English art world – he has that kind of grandeur".)
- 57 History is written by the winners. Across the centuries it has been the fate of Alsace-Lorraine to be a part of both France and Germany. Each time the region changed hands, so the school history books were rewritten. So ambiguous did its identity become I was told by

a witness that when it was reoccupied in May 1940 a teacher entered the room one day and simply continued the lesson in German. Nobody noticed. The German armies were crossing the Meuse as a story in the *New York Journal American* commented, "It seems that the Germans are not interested in France this time" and in London, the *Sunday Chronicle* headlined "Despair in Berlin". The schoolteachers knew differently, in Alsace-Lorraine the full gravity of events were obvious. After 48 French years they would be German again.

- 58 Falkenburg's argument is well summarised as a "process of negotiation between image and imagination, pictorial and mental imagery, sensory spectacle and visual speculation" by Walter S Melion in his introduction to *Image and Imagination* 2007 p32
- 59 *The Garden of Earthly Delights* 220x195cm. Outer shutters *The Creation of the World* 220x97cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
- 60 *Genesis* 3:5 "your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good from evil." See also Chapter 4 for *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.
- 61 Falkenburg took a line from Augustine's *Confessions* Book VII A Neoplatonic Quest X, 16, translated by Pusey as "I perceived myself to be far off from Thee, in the region of unlikeness – *in regione dissimilitudinis*" – and by Charles Dahlberg *The Literature of Unlikeness* 1988 p2, whom Falkenburg credits, but misquotes, as "I found myself far off from you in the land of unlikeness." Henry Chadwick in 1991 was more correct, if less poetic: "And I found myself far from you 'in the region of dissimilarity', and heard as it were your voice from on high."
- 62 Chadwick 1991 p221 *Confessions* Book XI i.1 "Therefore I lay bare my feelings towards you, by confessing to you"
- 63 Chadwick 1991 p201 *Confessions* Book X, Memory xxvii 38 "And see, you were within..."
- 64 Regina Psaki 'The Literature of Unlikeness' *Comparative Literature* 44/1 Winter 1992 p94. The review continues, "Eventually "the land of unlikeness" colonized patristic and vernacular writing, less as an isolated motif than as a reflection of the ubiquitous – if often tacit – narrative concern with "restoring the image of God in man"."
- 65 Rushworth M Kidder *Dylan Thomas: The Country of the Spirit* 1973 writing about Thomas's poem 'A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London'
- 66 For more on both *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and St Augustine see chapter 4.
- 67 Bruegel *The Procession to Calvary* Oil on panel, 124x170cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 68 Kavalier *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* 1999 p257
- 69 Stanley Ferber 'Peter Bruegel and the Duke of Alba' *Renaissance News* 1966 vol 19-3 p216
- 70 J H Hessels *Epistulae Ortelianae* p53, quoted by René Boumans 'The Religious Views of Abraham Ortelius' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol 17 3/4 1954 p 376
- 71 The Prodigal Son has a higher status than the loyal stay-at-home, something that is always difficult for the moral middle classes who believe they know right from wrong. It is only saints and sinners who are conscious of good and evil. The paradox that the sinner is the closest thing to a saint is also difficult for them to contemplate. Both saints and sinners acknowledge divine truth, even if sinners turn it down. The most honorific of Catholics is the lapsed or unorthodox one. No club in the world is as effective as the Catholic Church in allotting honorary status to semi-outsiders. It is like being a country rather than a town member of some Pall Mall establishment, a gentleman's club.
- 72 an argument forcibly made by among others Reindert Falkenburg eg *Bruegel and Netherlandish Landscape Painting from the National Gallery Prague* Tokyo/Kyoto catalogue 1990, 'Pieter Bruegels Kruisdraging: een proeve van 'close-reading' *Oud Holland* vol 107 1993 pp17-33, and Joseph F Gregory 'Towards the Contextualization of Pieter Bruegel's 'Procession to Calvary'. Constructing the Beholder From Within the Eyckian Tradition' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 1996 pp207-221
- 73 Gregory *ibid* 1996 p216
- 74 Fernando Marias, from a paper delivered in 2007 at the second Bosch conference in 's-Hertogenbosch, stated that the Spanish royal family would gather around *The Haywain* or the *Seven Deadly Sins* "and talk about them, using them as moral lessons as well as child entertainment". Later published "Bosch and Dracontius' De Creatione Mundi Hexameron' *Jheronymus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 's-Hertogenbosch 2010 pp246-263
- 75 Various disputed works would fill out this list, for example, the *Entombment* drawing in the British Museum that cannot be authenticated, *Christ Before Pilate* known from a copy in Rotterdam, lost prototypes of the *Lamentation*, two supposed copies of an *Arrest*, etc. Even the pictures that are generally accepted as Bosch have become progressively fewer with the fashion for de-attribution, and the list of works disputed on technical grounds growing ever longer. (As it is not the main subject of the painting, I omit from this list the highly significant, but very small, scenes of Christ's Passion that surround the arch in the grisaille *Mass of St Gregory*.)
- 76 *Crucifixion with a Donor* Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België 74.7x61cm
- 77 Given a *terminus post quem* of 1477-1483 by Pascale Fraiture (see Vermet 'Hieronymus Bosch: painter, workshop or style?' *Hieronymus Bosch: the complete paintings and drawings* 2001 p88). Marijnissen is one of those who accepts it as Bosch, p346. With no demons or monsters in sight, Friedländer compared it with Van der Weyden. Linfert wrote "It strikes one as a crucifix painted from memory, a notion borne out by the fact that Christ is smaller and more stylized than the other figures" *Bosch* 2003 p14. De Tolnay sees the clear influence of a 1444 wall painting in the late-Gothic collegiate church of St John in 's-Hertogenbosch, *Hieronymus Bosch* 1966 pp11 and 20. But that painting, (De Tolnay mistakenly refers to "frescoes") its style, composition, and colours, is standard fare. The wear, damage, overpainting, and restoration of the *Crucifixion* all weaken the attribution. The Brabantine landscape of Golgotha, however, certainly reflects other pictures by the artist, and thus it may well be accepted as workshop. The donor has not been identified, the overall image is completely conventional, with Heaven the reward for ostentatious piety once Peter and John have had a word with the Virgin Mary. The fact that Christ is not in pain would seem significant as to the date. Once the crypt at the church of San Colombano in Bologna had become blocked up at the end of the 15th century, a fresco there went unseen until 2005. Attributed by Franco Faranda in 2010 to Giunta Pisano, the first artist to depict the dying Christ as a man in pain rather than an erect godhead, as seen, for example, in the Bosch *Crucifixion*. The emphasis on a suffering Christ in depictions of the *Crucifixion* followed on from the 13th century apocalyptic predictions of Joachim of Fiore (see chapter 5) and the religious revival led by new orders, such as the Franciscans, who developed the whole cycle of stories on the Passion.
- 78 De Tolnay, with whom, on this, one may obviously disagree, devotes a short section to *The Suffering Redeemer* on the basis of the few works mentioned above, *ibid* pp20-22. The body of work of which we are aware does not indicate either an emphasis on the Passion, or that these images were an essential prelude to the triptychs, or to the series of ascetics. Nevertheless, the artist's profound piety did lead him to his renunciation of the world demonstrated in those later works.
- 79 In a similar reversal of sensory ability Helmut Heidenreich quotes Juan Fernández Navarrete (a dumb painter known as El Mudo) "driving home the point that a picture was a mute poem and a poem a picture with a voice" a line that he may or may not have taken from a 16th century Portuguese Latin dictionary the author translates as "painting is called silent or mute poetry, for it represents the images of things without explaining what they are" 1592 fol 165 'Hieronymus Bosch in Some Literary Contexts' *Journal of the*

Warburg and Courtauld Institutes vol 33 1970 p173. The article is also of interest for its references to Spanish views of “the importance of the ridiculous” and some contentious ideas about Bosch as a possible atheist.

- 80 *Christ Carrying the Cross* El Escorial. Possibly the left wing of a triptych, possibly an altarpiece, possibly destined for a monastery or private chapel, possibly by Bosch but probably a workshop production from c1500, this large panel (150 x 94cm) is less an accusation than an appeal to an inner Cross of self-denial *Matthew* 16:24-5 “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.” Also *Luke* 9:23. Bosch takes elements from all four Gospel accounts and incorporates them into these devotional pictures. “Taking up one’s cross each day is the surest way of penance” – *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1435.
- 81 And of course the Jews were specifically identified in late medieval dramas as guilty of not helping Christ; Simon of Cyrene being forced by Roman soldiers to help with carrying the cross. Justin Lewis-Arthony identifies two of the tormentors in *Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns)* as a Jew and a Muslim *Circles of Thorns: Hieronymus Bosch and Being Human* 2008 p13. The threat posed by Islam to Europe and the traditional anti-Semitism based on fear and fantasy was common enough. So was the portrayal of Judas with red hair, ‘Judas-coloured’ as it was called, for the merchant, stretching up to grip Christ in a “depiction of the libel of Jewish ‘Host desecration’” – commerce and desecration predictably and neatly combined.
- 82 De Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1966 pp20-21. *The Christ* in Ghent wears “the gaze that strikes to the heart”.
- 83 Sixten Ringbom *Icon to narrative: the rise of the dramatic close-up in 15th-century devotional painting* 1965 pp155-70
- 84 Rowan Williams *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief* 2007 p66 “... your life will give a foretaste of God’s rule.”
- 85 De Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1966 p21
- 86 *Christ Carrying the Cross* in the Escorial is dated between 1492 and 1498 according to dendrochronological data, is considered original by Unverfehrt (1980), Marijnissen (1987), possibly workshop by Silver (2006). It was recorded in the Escorial inventory of 1574, see Paul Vandenbroeck ‘The Spanish inventarios reales and Hieronymus Bosch’ *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights into his Life and Work* Jos Koldeweij and Bernard Vermet (eds) 2001 p50. Is it by Bosch? Can we trust the scientific evidence? When the team from the Bosch Research and Conservation Project surveyed the picture in 2012, Christ was discovered to be shedding a tear worthy of Rogier van der Weyden. Who painted that? Having stated that this painting “can no longer be accepted as by Bosch”, Ron Spronk goes on to add the caveat, “we need to keep the limits of dendrochronology in mind.” *All by himself?* 2011 pp39-40.
- 87 It was a phrase coined by William Wey, who visited the Holy Land in 1458 and 1462. The original route began at Calvary and worked back to Pilate’s house. Whilst many of the stations are no longer recognised as part of the Via Dolorosa, from the beginning the number varied from five to 42. It was devotional manuals produced in the 16th century in Germany and the Low Countries that first popularised the number 14. In 1462 Wey wrote of 14, only five of which correspond to the stations used today. (The ancient diocese of Vienne in Isère in the south of France still used 11 stations as late as 1799. Again, only five correspond to those in use today.) The Franciscans gained custody of the sacred sites in Jerusalem in 1342, reversed the order, and set about establishing sets of stations, a monopoly the Order maintained until 1731. As many of the traditional elements are not found in the Gospels Paul VI established a scriptural Way of the Cross in 1975.
- 88 TS Eliot is usually credited with the quote “The journey not the arrival matters.” Leonard Woolf took it as the title for the fifth volume of his autobiography. These journeys, however, also gave rise to the invention of guide-books. “The great pilgrimages left behind not only evocative written accounts, but sometimes also rich graphic imagery. One of the earliest pilgrim travel books was written by a French monk, Aimeric Picaud, who visited Santiago de Compostela during the middle of the 12th century. The itinerary was an often-used medieval convention for the presentation of simple written information alongside a cartographic rationalisation of a route. Indeed the modern strip map is such an itinerary. The Great Pilgrimage from Venice to Jerusalem in 1458 resulted in William Wey, writing his *Itineraries* and 50 years later, these were almost certainly plagiarised and printed as a guidebook for pilgrims to the Holy Land.” Barry Kitts ‘Guiding Light’ *Graphics International* 81 January 2001 p28
- 89 After 1200 the search for the divine concentrated on the specific details of the life and death of Christ. The Dominicans produced their own line on Christ’s sufferings culminating in Aquinas building a logical case for Christ’s suffering being greater than any experienced by anyone in history. St Francis emphasized the ordinariness and humanity of Christ in order to make worshipping Him as God easier. *Meditations on the Life of Christ* attributed to John de Caulibus presented “eye witness accounts interlaced with commentary and exhortation which all imaginatively extended the Gospel narratives” to inspire readers in their daily lives as they attempted to imitate Christ. The lack of completeness of the gospels was celebrated as an opportunity for people to fill in the gaps! Emphasising contemporary preaching, to assist in the Franciscan style of devotion the *Meditations* were pictorial in character, the manuscripts were full of illustrations, and in particular the extremes of Jesus’s life were accentuated; his infancy and the Passion. In visual terms, the King in Majesty and the Good Shepherd gave way to the Man of Sorrows and, referring back to Augustine, the heirs of apostolic love gave in to hatred with Jews becoming more closely connected with Christ’s pain and suffering, and the Devil with his agents on earth, witches making their entry. See MacCulloch 2009 pp415-423
- 90 Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* c175-185 treatise in five books devoted to the ‘Detection and Overthrow of False Knowledge’ 4.20.7
- 91 Forty or so drawings, unsigned, undated, some innovatively produced as finished items in themselves, some of which bear a passing resemblance to painted motifs, and that have begun to be studied alongside the underdrawings of the paintings, giving the impression of ideas being worked out first as sketches, a process unknown before in northern Europe, and many, many imitations being passed off as by Bosch, leave debateable attributions everywhere including drawings that may form the basis of paintings for later workshop production. Larry Silver comments on Frédéric Elsig’s proposal that Bosch worked in his father’s atelier as part of a large workshop before establishing his own independent studio. Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p276. Elsig *Jheronimus Bosch. La question de la chronologie* 2004. There are still a lot of unresolved questions surrounding these drawings, but the belief that Bosch was the first artist to produce drawings as independent artworks in their own right is something it would be nice to believe is correct, but we can go no further.
- 92 *The Ascent to Calvary / Christ Carrying the Cross* Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Vienna 57.2x32cm
- 93 *The Mocking of Christ* in the Escorial, generally now referred to as *Christ Crowned with Thorns* shows Jesus looking sideways, perhaps considering the grisaille angels and demons doing battle around the tondo. He does not direct his eyes at us. But at its centre, perhaps because this is a decent copy rather than an original, torture seems something of a ceremony instead of the usual brute action we might expect. (See Claude Phillips ‘The Mocking of Christ, by Hieronymus Bosch’ *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* vol17/90 September 1910 pp321-328 for a highly dramatic piece of writing about it.) Max J Friedländer considered it the only original version, but later added the painting in the National Gallery. However, the painting in the Escorial is now known to be by a follower due to conclusive dendrochronological evidence that the panel on which it is painted is from a tree felled around a decade after the death of Bosch.
- 94 *Christ Before Pilate* oil and tempera on panel 11.7x125.5cm Princeton University Art Museum; *Christ Crowned with Thorns* oil on panel 151x335cm Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, Valencia

- 95 Silver *ibid* p337
- 96 Hugo von Hofmannsthal *Book of Friends* 1922 quoted in JD McClatchy (ed) *The Whole Difference. Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal* 2008 p147
- 97 Hence a detail from the Ghent *Christ Carrying the Cross* was chosen for the cover of *The Rage Against God: Why Faith is the Foundation of Civilisation* by Peter Hitchens in 2010, the story of his changing attitude to religion and personal journey from atheism to faith in God.
- 98 *Christ Carrying the Cross* oil on panel 74x81cm Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent
- 99 Carl Linfert *Hieronymus Bosch* 2003 p36
- 100 Veronica gently pressed a cloth to Christ's face to wipe away the sweat as Christ passed her by on the road to Calvary, the sixth station of the Cross. When she withdrew the cloth the face of Jesus had been miraculously imprinted on it by 'divine will'. This 'true likeness' was kept in St Peter's in Rome, pilgrims flocked to see it, and from the 13th century images of it were circulating throughout Christianity. Hence there was a consensus as to Christ's appearance. It became the reference point for artists convinced that they were working from the absolute authenticity of a 'divinely sanctioned' image. Bosch drew on the tradition in *Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns)* where Jesus is portrayed before he met Veronica, at the moment he is about to be crowned with thorns, the 'King of the Jews'.
- 101 Larry Silver *Jheronimus Bosch and the Issue of Origins* paper delivered in 2007 at the second Bosch conference and later published as 'Jheronimus Bosch and the Question of Origins' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp34-56
- 102 This is a reference to the version in London, dated c1490-1500. National Gallery panel 73.7x58.7cm. Bill Viola's *Quintet of the Astonished* produced in response to *Christ Mocked* (see the *entr'acte* in chapter 4) may owe more to *Christ Carrying the Cross*. The structure of the film reflects the latter painting, where the emotions are expressed rather than inferred, but the origin of the emotions in the film is unknown, whereas in the paintings the man is about to be killed. Viola admits to having considered the Ghent picture but his point of reference remains, he claims, *Christ Mocked* – his medium is time, the film lasts around 20 minutes; surveys suggest most people give a painting in a gallery less than 30 seconds at most, Bosch used paint and is still arresting after 500 years (cf n56 earlier).
- 103 One might add, the eye is also on art historians arguing over the differences in painterly technique between the Ghent and London panels. Are they so great that attribution to one artist is untenable? Are the technical similarities between the panels evidence of a single Master's hand? Are inconsistencies in the underdrawing evidence of two or more hands at work? Do the changes in composition provide evidence of confidence by one artist or collaboration between several? Could different and distinct painting techniques really be executed by one artist on the same panel? The debate goes on.
- 104 "There is eye against Eye, mirror against Mirror, image against Image." *Spiegel der eewegher salecheit III* (Mirror of Eternal Salvation)
- 105 "De opperste appel is ihesus xpus die een Spiegel is sonder smette daer elckerlijc in sien mach zijn selfs aensichte. In dese Spiegel sulstu dy spiegelen ende daer nae leven want alstu dy daer wel in spiegels dijn wech sal veel te lichter weesen" Guillaume de Digulleville or Déguilleville 1295-c1358 *Le Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* 1330-1 / *Pèlerinage de l'Homme* 1355 was translated and printed in Middle Dutch, in Haarlem in 1486. "The supreme eye is Jesus Christ who is a mirror without blemish in which each man may see his own face. You will see yourself in this mirror and then you will live, for if you see yourself in the mirror your way will be illuminated." The previous quote noted by Marijnissen p333: "I would like to show you this using the example of the eyeball. Although it is small, it can take in an entire person. So it is with the mirror." (Noch wil ic dy dit beproeven inden appel van uwen oghe Besiet hoe zeer cleyn dat de appel is daer gij een geheel mensch in begrijpt In een spiegel diesgelijc.)
- 106 The increasing preoccupation with death following the Black Death led to the Church using the Seven Deadly Sins as a recruiting tool, wheels of vice and virtue were created, an early 15th century example of which existed in a church in Ingatestone in Essex, very near my parent's home, Gibson even pointing to its similarity with the 'Bosch tabletop' – *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* Museo Nacional del Prado 120x150cm. The Four Last Things were a theme that Bosch could have known from a 1477 translation, published in Gouda, of Denis the Carthusian who popularised the concept in *Quattuor novissima*. For more on Denis, see chapter 3.
- 107 As Philip II had it placed by his bed it may well have been an aid to both prayer and the examination of conscience before confession.
- 108 Referred to as a tabletop ('Painted table-top' De Tolnay p58) some have questioned whether tabletops have frames. However, this frame could have been added as a result of a split running the length of the panels; *prie-dieu* or 'originally built into the ceiling of a small room' Marijnissen 2007 pp333-4; 'customarily ranked among the early works' Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck, 'the work of a beginner' De Tolnay p15, even 'early 15th century' Reuterswärd 1970 p166; a later work has been suggested with reference to the costumes, and 'from the artist's later period' Silver 2006 p318 re work by both KG Boon *Burlington Magazine* CX 1968 p157 and D Bax *NKJ* XIII 1962 pp24-26; a discussion document – 'to be not only contemplated but walked around' Fraenger 1951; by 'two artists' Baldass and Heinz 1968 p61; by Bosch – the corrections and compositional changes 'suggest that this work is an original Bosch' Garrido and Van Schoute 2001 pp79-95 ; by his workshop – "an atelier work" Silver 2006 p318; by a 'follower' Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet 2001 p183 (Vermet notes that "some of the costumes... indisputably date from around 1500" p93); by a 'pupil', or a later 'copy' see De Guevara *Comentarios de la Pintura* c1560 also see *Northern Renaissance Art 1400-1600 Sources and Documents* transl Stechow (with views on interpretation) 1966 p20 (Stefan Fischer believes misinterpretation of Guevara has led to attribution as a copy 'Este género de pintura se llamase Grillo' *About the High and Low in Bosch's Art* 2012); a 'forgery' Gossart 1907 p60; an 'unwanted stepchild' Gibson 1973 p205. Gibson's view of it being a "collaborative effort" seems right, completed perhaps toward 1500. All the doubts arose despite authentication in a royal inventory of 1577, described as "from the hand of Geronimo Bosque", something Fray José de Sigüenza was happy to accept in his *Historia de la Orden de San Gerónimo* 1605.
- 109 God as both witness and mirror was a topical idea. "Thou art an eye... thy sight being an eye or living mirror" is a line from *Die vision dei* c1453, first published in Strasbourg in 1489, and written by Nicholas Cryfts (Krebs), Cardinal of Cusa. Nicholas, c1401-1464 (not the son of a poor fisherman, as frequently recorded, but a wealthy boatman) was a papal legate, and general multilingual travelling 'Mr Fix-it' for Eugene IV and Pius II, whose theological writings have been described as Thomas à Kempis in philosophical language – "God is possible, therefore actual". For an alternative view of Déguilleville see Yona Pinson 'Painted Sermon: a moralized semi-secular triptych by Jheronimus Bosch' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) pp265-277. With regards the mirror there is a debate to be had on Augustine's ideas of the mirror of the soul as a comprehensive and cumulative image of both 'the mirrors known as compendiums of knowledge' and 'mirrors of idealised virtue' that some treat as separate genres; eg Herbert Grabes *Speculum, Mirror und Looking-glass* 1973 transl Gordon Collier as *The Mutable Glass. Mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance* 1982 on the shifting historical uses of the mirror as metaphor, and Petronella Bange *Spiegels der Christenen. Zelfreflectie en ideaalbeeld in laat-middeleeuwse moralistisch-didactische traktaten* 1986. The mirror as the Devil's bottom was a regular fixture in medieval literature and imagery; the naked rear-end even being given eyes to turn into a monstrous face staring at its own mirror-image in the Hell panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.
- 110 Reindert Falkenburg *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil's Book of Nature* 2007 Madrid draft lecture p6
- 111 Ezekiel 7:9 "And my eye shall see not spare, neither will I shew mercy: but I will lay thy ways upon thee, and thy abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and you shall know that I am the Lord that strike."

- 112 Bartholomew of Bologna believed the eyes of saints became transparent in order that they were able to see the Godhead directly. See Gibson 'Hieronymus Bosch and the Mirror of Man' 1973 *Oud Holland* vol 87 p221.
- 113 A Latin text confirms the painting's divine nature: "cave, cave, dominus videt" – beware, beware, God sees. The Man of Sorrows stares out across a frieze of the *Seven Deadly Sins*, the sinners unaware that they are being overlooked.
- 114 see Herbert Grabes, transl Gordon Collier 1982 "It is the didactic and moral, rather than the epistemological, reflecting function of the mirror that accounts for the striking persistence of the metaphor of man as a mirror – though, of course, the epistemological function (leading to self-knowledge) serves as a basis for moral improvement." p81. Grabes also points out the "mirror of historiography or 'Poesie historica' is regarded as being superior to the mirror of individual experience – both in terms of didactic effect and... in terms of 'delection': it ensures a clarifying distance from things of the past and serves to fix the flux of human events... That the real mirror can offer only a fleeting image, and that the past cannot be permanently captured... [while] the lessons of the past all too often turn out to be distorted images." p96 and reminds us that "one factor pertaining to the metaphorical use of the mirror to express similarity which is frequently left out of account, an essential factor setting the mirror-image apart from other 'images'... the mirror shows an image only so long as the original is present, only so long as mirror and original are juxtaposed" p113
- 115 Robert Hughes *Nothing If Not Critical* 1990 p15. Hughes is writing about the value of contemplation, the need to see original images in order to appreciate their scale and quality, what he also refers to as "the tyranny of the unseen masterpiece", p4, and the reduction of everything to a 35mm slide at university that inevitably diminishes a large part of its meaning, and which he sees as responsible for the rise of theory over practice and hence conceptual art – something I witnessed first hand at art school in the 1960s as the nature of the work produced in the Fine Art Department changed. After the advent of the Google Art Project in 2011, patience was proved to pay off, when even the director of Tate, Nicholas Serota, admitted that he saw things in Bruegel's *The Harvesters* that he had never seen before. And it is always important to really look, to see the original. At Christie's, when assessing or valuing something, they have a phrase, "I have not yet stood in front of the painting" – no matter how many times they may have seen reproduced images of it, they will not give their opinion.
- 116 Falkenburg *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil's Book of Nature* 2007 Madrid draft lecture p2
- 117 What might a late medieval audience expect with regards imagery related to "the path taken by sinners"? Gibson has noted Psalm 11:9 "The wicked walk around in a circle" which in the Douay-Rheims translation is strangely weakened unnecessarily to "The wicked walk around about". Here again is evidence of the power of St Augustine over medieval thought, and in particular his influence over Bosch (if indeed the tabletop is by Bosch). Augustine saw the wicked revolving around error, "a street without end. He who walks in a straight line, starts somewhere and ends somewhere; but he who moves in circles ends nowhere. Such is the misfortune of the wicked, which becomes clearer in another psalm: The wicked move around in circles." *Enarrationes in psalmos* 139,13. Gibson reinforces his reading by quoting *The City of God* XIII:13 "the path in which their false doctrine runs is circuitous" with regards Augustine's condemnation of "the cyclical views of history held by the pagans" – see 'Hieronymus Bosch and the Mirror of Man' *Oud Holland* 1973 vol 87 pp211-212.
- 118 Tobias Wolff of Stanford University at the Aspen Ideas Festival in 2007. Wolff also wrote *Winter Light*, an essay about faith and doubt that appeared in the *New Yorker* 9 June 2008, in which he discussed aesthetics as a doorway into the divine, art as divine revelation: "We like to think of our beliefs, and disbeliefs, as founded on reason and close, thoughtful observation. Only in theory do we begin to suspect the power of aesthetics to shape our lives." In *Jesus of Nazareth* Joseph Ratzinger considers the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke do 'not set out to tell stories but to write history, interpreted and understood in the context of the word of God', takes seriously the question of whether the Virgin Birth is 'myth' or 'historical truth' and addresses a variety of details that were converted to narrative: the ox and the ass appeared at the Christmas crib by way of Isaiah and St Francis, the camels are trespassers from Psalm 72, Dionysius miscalculated the date of Jesus' birth, and the star that brought the Magi to Jerusalem may have been a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7-6BC.
- 119 Virgil *Aeneid* 1.464-65 "it was only a painting, but sighing deeply, he let his thoughts feed on it, and his face was wet with a stream of tears".
- 120 *The Adoration of the Magi* outer shutters *The Mass of St Gregory* Museo Nacional del Prado central panel 138x72cm, side shutters 138x33cm. A painting that has also been called *The Prado Epiphany* and *The Bronchorst-Boschhuys Triptych* wrongly identifying the coats of arms that appear inside as belonging to the two families. The identification of Peter Scheyfve and Agnes de Gramme by Paul Vandenbroeck who thought them childless (*Jheronimus Bosch. De verlossing van der wereld* 2002 pp176-7) and Xavier Duquenne ('Peeter Scheyfve représenté par Jérôme Bosch' *L'Intermédiaire des Généalogistes* 349 Jan-Feb 2004 pp11-19) who believed the closed wings showed Peter's son Jan to the right of the altar and Agnes' father Peeter to the left. Hence if there is an alternative title it would be *The Scheyfve-de Gramme Triptych*. See Marianne Renson 'Genealogical Information Concerning The Bronchorst-Boschhuysen Triptych' for an essay on the provenance of the painting and the potentially startling conclusions that the *Prado Adoration* is a copy, and that *The Bronchorst-Boschhuysen Triptych* is another work of art entirely, from *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldewij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001 pp92-5. With regards dates, Vermet considers the *Prado Adoration* an early work, a highly debateable idea. The dendrochronological result of testing the New York single panel painting of the same name resulted in an estimate of the date after which it was painted as c1468-74. Coupled with similarities to the triptych in the Prado this led Vermet to suggest the New York version was an original composition for which Bosch was wholly or at least in part responsible, an example of the artist's development within the family workshop. Regularly considered an early work, the Metropolitan nevertheless considered it a pastiche c1550, see Della Clason Sperling *From Van Dyck to Bruegel* 1999 p258 who acknowledges "the felling date of about 1472... our panel was most likely painted much later" also noting its unquestioned attribution up to 1937 when De Tolnay contested it. "In 1964 Eisler called it a 'charming but inconsequential Boschian pastiche.'" Sperling further notes the 16th century costumes, the lesser quality of the underdrawing which "betrays the hand of a follower" and concludes with "the disturbing sense of emptiness. The picture is a testament to both the enduring appeal of Boschian figure types and their basic incompatibility with the space of a Renaissance painting." It is not by Bosch. Neither is it a copy of a lost original. It was the product of market demand. (However, according to Baldass in 1917 it is the oldest Bosch painting we have, whereas Unverfehrt in 1980 declared it not authentic, nor even a copy of an authentic work. Despite Sperling's essay, the wall caption in the Metropolitan has attributed it to Bosch for the last decade.) Vandenbroeck dates the Prado triptych between 1495 and 1499, Duquenne 1491-1498, arguably 1494 with later additions c1507, on the basis of archival evidence regarding the patrons. Koreny agrees with the 'split' dating but believes "the donors inside and out were painted by the painter of the Prado Haywain" *Boschhuysen or Scheyfve? Observations on Hieronymus Bosch's Prado Epiphany* Bosch conference paper delivered 2012. Bernard Vermet argues for an early dating of both the New York and Prado works, reinforced by the resemblance of the city and landscape of the Prado triptych to that of the Brussels *Crucifixion*, another disputed early work. He is also unaware of just how near Bethlehem is to Jerusalem, that it really is a city on a hill, visible from much further away, and clearly within sight of the birthplace of Jesus. Vermet 'Hieronymus Bosch: painter, workshop or style?' *Hieronymus Bosch. The Complete Paintings and Drawings* 2001 p88 and Peter Klein 'Dendrochronological Analysis of Works by Hieronymus Bosch and His Followers' *Hieronymus Bosch – New Insights Into His Life and Work* 2001 pp121-131. According to Friedländer 1969 *Early Netherlandish Painting* vol V p50 the *Prado Adoration* "displays the assurance of maturity" an observation that becomes ever more prescient as the scientific track of the Bosch Research and Conservation Project progresses.

- 121 The shepherds reverence or lack of it is discussed by Reindert Falkenburg in relation to behaviour during Mass and sacramental processions in the Middle Ages 'Hieronymus Bosch's Mass of St Gregory and "sacramental vision"' *Das Bild der Erscheinung. Die Gregorsmesse im Mittelalter* ed A Gormans & T Lentens 2007 p183
- 122 Lotte Brand Philip made the suggestion of the Jewish Messiah who legend had it would appear as a leper in golden manacles. From a Christian point of view, being a false messiah meant he could be seen as the Antichrist, the ruler of the world during its Final Days. 'The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch' *Art Bulletin* 1953/4 pp267-294. In 2010 Jeanne van Waadenonjien pointed to the typological meaning of some Old Testament scenes with the representation of Abner before David on the orb carried by the black king, a prefiguration of the adoration of the Magi, and the fourth king as the Jewish Messiah described in Isaiah, a prefiguration of Christ. Fraenger saw the mystery character in the doorway as a fourth magus, Gombrich identified him as Herod, neither of which are convincing. However, Marijnissen *Bosch* 2007 p239-40 makes a better fist of explaining why it might indeed be Herod.
- 123 Larry Silver makes the point that this is a universal, inclusive image, the Magi representing Africa, Asia and "the one closest to the sacred space of the Virgin and child is the European, who is given pride of place" which is very neat, but all a little far-fetched. *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p168. The diagrammatic T-O maps that were still the basis of maps throughout the Middle Ages with connotations of the Trinity in their tripartite split of the earth, with the cartographic application of the continents' names, for example, Marmion's world map of 1460 had Noah's three sons, each dominating a land mass of imaginary landscapes reminiscent of Flanders and the Mediterranean. See also chapter 8: The impact of maps
- 124 Yona Pinson 'Connotations of Sin and Heresy in the Figure of the Black King in Some Northern Renaissance Adorations' *Artibus et Historiae* vol 17/34 1996 pp159-175 makes the point that the black king became an established figure in the late Middle Ages, and that "especially in the Netherlands and Germany, blackness or swarthinness were perceived as symbols of evil, sin and the demonic" relating blackness to both evil and heresy. She also notes the medieval exegesis that "the Kings were descendants of Noah's sons", the black king "believed to be descended from Ham" who, according to St Augustine "dwells in the earthly City of Evil". See *City of God* Book XV p20. Pinson concludes with a note on Church policy in the 15th century that did not automatically denounce blacks, encouraging as it did a positive attitude towards the Ethiopian and Coptic churches in its quest to integrate everything under Rome in view of the increasing Ottoman threat. See also Paul H D Kaplan *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* 1985
- 125 There is a hint of the *Madonna with Chancellor Rolin* suggested by De Tolnay, Baldass, and others, Bax making De Tolnay's observation that "it was only after 1500 that Bosch started working to the example of Jan van Eyck and the Master of the Flémalle" *Hieronymus Bosch his picture-writing deciphered* 1949 transl MA Bax-Botha 1979 p329
- 126 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p40
- 127 Lotte Brand Philip 'The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch' *Art Bulletin* 1953/4 p281
- 128 Max Friedländer *From Van Eyck to Bruegel* 1956 p58
- 129 ibid De Tolnay p41. The author goes on to remind us "The crown of thorns and the jewels of these newly-converted savages are doubtless a reference to the Stations of the Passion. There is nothing surprising about this interpretation of the Epiphany: did not members of the Brotherhood of Our Lady regard themselves as the direct successors of the Three Wise Men through their special worship of the Virgin?"
- 130 Mark 2:10 "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" and St Matthew 26:63-4 "And the high priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."
- 131 Lotte Brand Philip 'The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch' *Art Bulletin* 1953/4 p287
- 132 Lynn F Jacobs pointed out that the overall shape of this triptych is determined by its external imagery culminating in the rise of Calvary whereas the interior bears no relationship to the shape. 'The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch' *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 31/4 Winter 2000 p1034
- 133 As several writers have pointed out, this unusual feature runs counter to the tradition of displaying the *Arma Christi*, the instruments of the Passion: namely the Cross, Crown of Thorns, column where Christ was whipped, the sponge that was offered to Jesus, the lance that went into His side, the nails, and the veil of Veronica. Other items were added and subtracted at various times, the strangest perhaps being the rooster that crowed after Peter's third denial of Christ. The unusual chronology of the scenes reading back and forth across the arch was first pointed out by Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p372.
- 134 Max Friedländer 1969 *Early Netherlandish Painting* vol V p50
- 135 The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, visited the Holy Land c327, and reportedly cleared the Holy Places of the accumulated debris of three centuries, and then with spectacular good fortune, rare in archaeology, collected vast numbers of relics including, rather implausibly after three centuries, the True Cross, identified the location of seemingly everything important from the sites of the nativity in Bethlehem to the sensational double of Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem – hence she is the patron saint of new discoveries. Most of the 'known facts' about her dissolve under examination in a life that begins in surmise and ends in legend. With an eye to self-promotion, it was Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, who c350 linked the discoveries with the visit of the Dowager Empress.
- 136 The death of Judas is recorded in the Gospel According to St Matthew 27:5 "And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed: and went and hanged himself with an halter" and Acts of the Apostles 1:18 "and he indeed hath possessed a field of the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, burst asunder in the midst: and all his bowels gushed out" brief descriptions included as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy in order to fill a gap in the story, ie a midrash, an unclear text that Augustine, Jerome and others attempted to explain in order to allay any threat to scriptural reliability. Coupled with the Devil, diabolic birds, "envoys of hell" are the clues to his identity in the painting.
- 137 Lotte Brand Philip 'The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch' *Art Bulletin* 1953/4 p292. Reviewing the paper, Otto Kurz began "Those who thought that *The Prado Epiphany* by Hieronymus Bosch represented the 'Adoration of the Magi' will rub their eyes if they read a paper by Lotte Brand Philip" *The Burlington Magazine* vol 96 /613 1954 pp118-119. However, Brand Philip's theory received considerable backing by Ludwig Baldass a few years later when he acknowledged, among various dogmatic assertions, only her thinking on *The Prado Epiphany* and Cuttler's essay on the Lisbon *Temptation of St Antony* as important.
- 138 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p40
- 139 *The Wayfarer* oil on panel 71x70.6cm Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. *The Haywain* two versions, central panel both 135x100cm, outer shutters *The Wayfarer* 135x45.1cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, and Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial. For the possibility of a third version mentioned in the correspondence of Mencía de Mendoza: H Th Colenbrander *Hieronymus Bosch and Diego Guevara: The 'third' Haywain* 2012. One significant difference between the Rotterdam and Madrid panels is the religious intent of the latter, clearly signalled by the presence of a cross on the bridge at the time of the painting's execution, and subsequently overpainted, together with a tiny chapel with a cross inserted into a tree indicating that the man is expected to be understood by the viewer as 'Pilgrim', a fact discovered by the Bosch Research and Conservation Project in 2013.
- 140 Irving L Zupnick pointed out that *Visions of Tondal* was published in

- 's-Hertogenbosch in 1484, and referred to other versions of the story including two by Guillaume de Déguileville. Zupnick also refers to the metaphor of crossing a bridge in late medieval literature for the 'pilgrimage of the soul' – a 'bridge of sighs' that "was a standard allegorical indication of the passage to the nether world, and a symbol of the ordeal faced by the soul on its way to salvation" to the point of being a nearly universal motif. 'Bosch's Representation of Acedia and the Pilgrimage of Everyman' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 19 1968 pp115-132. Zupnick believes Bosch "combined and refurbished artistic and literary traditions to create a new kind of moralistic genre painting that pointed the way for the artists in Quentin Massy's circle and Pieter Bruegel". See also Reindert Falkenburg *Joachim Patinir. Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life* 1988 pp85-90, and AM Koldewij 'Lijfelijke en geestelijke pilgrimage. Materiele "souvenirs" van spirituele pelgrimage' *Geen povere schoonheid. Laat-middeleeuwse kunst in verband met de Moderne Devotie* K. Veelen-turf (ed) 2000 p227
- 141 Gustav Glück called one version *The Prodigal Son* in 1904, the Son at the moment of repentance, a concept objected to by Ludwig von Baldass in 1926. Dirk Hannema perpetuated the idea in 1931 when he secured the painting for the Museum Boijmans, going so far as to see the cow behind the gate as the fatted calf waiting to be killed on the prodigal's return. Either both paintings are the Prodigal Son or they are not. They are so similar that if not the Prodigal then they represent the journey through life, a sinful man in a sinful world, or repentant sinners, or even mankind in doubt as to which road to take. All critics seem to agree that the two characters are pedlars, and the problems arise with the positive and negative interpretations of a pedlar's life c1500, plus its sometimes ambiguously dual nature.
- 142 Late medieval literature, both prose and verse, and particularly French, reflect the currency of the theme of a journey to Paradise. They mostly share elements of Sorbon's *De Tribus Dietis*. There were even derivatives such as Raoul de Houdenc *Songe d'Enfer* c1225 that had a satirical take with Hell rather than Paradise as its object. In Robert de Sorbon *Tractatus de Tribus Dietis* (*Vie Paradisi*) highwaymen are metaphors for the Seven Deadly Sins. Sorbon's *La Voie de Paradis* had a wide manuscript dissemination but was never available in a printed edition. Also see n147.
- 143 Virginia G Tuttle 'Bosch's Image of Poverty' *The Art Bulletin* vol 63/1 1981 pp88-95. Lotte Brand Philip 'The Peddler by Hieronymus Bosch, A Study in Detection' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 9 1958 pp1-81
- 144 Or he is not – "while Bosch's figure is definitely not Everyman, there is a certain kinship" Roger Marijnissen with Peter Ruyffelaere *Hieronymus Bosch The Complete Works* 2007 p58
- 145 Late medieval folklore had it that the Devil assumed the form of a dog. Red equalled devilish (Caiphas, Malchus, Judas, and foxes) vicious dogs wore spiked collars; Christ's executioners were referred to as aggressive dogs and the National Gallery *Crowning with Thorns* features one with a spiked collar. Also a traveller on a fool card in Tarot shows a vagabond being attacked by a dog. Bohumil Vurm 'Jheronimus Bosch and Symbolism of Tarot Cards' *Jheronimus Bosch: His Sources* 2010 pp322-9. Links to the *Luttrell Psalter* and questions over whether the pedlar has been bitten or is being bitten by the aggressive dog-devil and its significance for *el camino de salvación*, the debate has been joined by Jacques Combe 1946, Seligmann 1953, César Péman 'Sobre la interpretación del viandante al reverse del Carro de Heno de El Bosco' *Archivo Español de Arte* 1961 vol XXXIV pp125-139, and Gibson 1983. For the 'bridge of judgement' see Robert Hughes *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* 1968 p64
- 146 *The Haywain* pedlar's repentance is debated, as is his status as Everyman, together with its links to *The Pedlar* in Rotterdam by among others Marijnissen p58, Silver p252 and 260, Jacobs p1031, Tuttle p88, De Bruyn 'The Pedlar as a Repentant Sinner' 2001 pp139-140 for the knapsack loaded with a lifetime's burden of sins.
- 147 The sermons of Robert de Sorbon (1201-1274), especially from the pulpit at St-Nicholas-du Chardonnet in Paris. See *The Middle English Wey of Paradys & the Middle French Voie de Paradis* FNM Diekstra (ed) 1991. The content has been described as the missing link between Guillaume de Déguileville's *Pèlerinage de l'Homme* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Sorbon's treatise on confession, *De Tribus Dietis* was a favourite.
- 148 Book of Exodus 5:3 "And they said: The God of the Hebrews hath called us, to go three days' journey into the wilderness and to sacrifice to the Lord our God: lest a pestilence or the sword fall upon us."
- 149 The image of the *scala celi* with these three portrayed as rungs on a ladder are found in manuscript illustrations, eg Joannes Gobio d1350, whose *Scala Celi* was printed 1485, see folio a2v. Three elements, comparable to the ladder of three rungs Jacob saw ascending to Heaven.
- 150 The image occurred in a standard authority on penance as early as Raymund de Pennaforte *Summa de Poenitentia* 1223-1230 Book III ch34 regarding the duties of confessor and penitent. Another treatment of confession of uncertain authorship and date, but frequently misattributed to Robert de Sorbon, *Magister Romani Cardinalis Sermo de Poenitentia*, uses the image of the *tres diete* and sets out the 15 degrees of good confession, their association with the 15 psalms (119-133) known as the Songs of Ascent, and the connection to the 15 steps of Solomon's temple.
- 151 The royal road to Heaven was penance, each consisting of three 'miles': contrition – abandoning sin, keeping oneself from relapse, intention to perform satisfaction; confession – number, weight, measure, ie number and gravity of one's sins, circumstances under which committed, and length of time one dwelled in sin; satisfaction – restitution, fasting, prayer. Perseverance consisted of fear of eternal punishment, hope of divine assistance, consideration of eternal reward.
- 152 Eric de Bruyn 'Hieronymus Bosch's So-called Prodigal Son Tondo: The Pedlar as a Repentant Sinner' *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldewij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001 p143. Peter Klein 'Dendrochronological Analysis of Works by Hieronymus Bosch and His Followers' *ibid* pp141-2. Note that all the panels have been trimmed down and that a small strip between the two halves of *The Pedlar* is missing. H Th Colenbrander disagrees that the gate has anything to do with death or "the entrance to a closed area with a higher spiritual meaning" *Hieronymus Bosch and Diego Guevara: The 'third' Haywain* conference paper 2012
- 153 Apart from the *Allegory of Gluttony* the paintings were all cut from the same tree, the extreme thinness of all the panels suggesting that they were painted on both sides and then split later. There is also a striking correspondence between the underdrawings of each of the fragments. But sadly there is no surviving candidate for the missing main central image, and more seriously, there is the possibility that the whole thing was made after the death of Bosch. Fritz Koreny has suggested they are all by a 'second Bosch', a young pupil who worked with the Master from around 1500 and continued to develop his style after he died in 1516, someone he calls the 'Hay Wain Master' (see chapter 8), something that needs to be considered in the light of discussion over the provenance of *The Haywain*, its dating, and controversy over the extent of workshop collaboration in its execution.
- 154 Gospel According to St John 8:12
- 156 Jos Koldewij 'Hieronymus Bosch and his city' *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldewij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001 p64. Koldewij also makes reference to *The Flight into Egypt* by 'a Brussels Master' c1500 now in the Castle Museum in Sternberk where the figure of Joseph "shows a remarkable similarity" to the Bosch *Pedlar* as well as late 15th century manuscripts, prints, and paintings with the same connection, plus a misericord in the Grote Kerk in Breda, carved c1460, that has striking similarities with the Bosch figure, suggesting a common frame of reference for the various artists, p78.
- 157 Marijnissen 1976 focused on the Rotterdam *Pedlar* and contemporary devotional literature including the Sermons of St Bernard printed in Middle Dutch in Zwolle in 1484 and 1495: Epistle of St Paul to the Hebrews 13:14 in divers admonitions and exhortations – "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come".

- 157 *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *Christ Child with Whirligig* oil on panel 57.2x32cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Vienna
- 158 Except Fraenger who thought it one side of a 'reversible panel for use in meditation' *Hieronymus Bosch* 1975 p424. De Tolnay was one of the first to suggest the child was Christ 1966 p27, Bax *Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture-Writing Deciphered* 1979 p168 connected the windmill, folly and the Passion, which as Jacobs observed in 'The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch' *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 31/4 Winter 2000 p1030 note 38, "[i]f valid, then the painting would form another example of a mirror of sins" the child symbolising the lack of wisdom of those who do not understand the significance of Christ's suffering shown inside, an example of Bosch forging a relationship across all parts of a triptych.
- 159 Rob Dückers, Ruud Priem (eds) *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* 2009 for the exhibition *Catherine's World. Devotion, Demons and Daily Life in the 15th Century* held in Nijmegen, based on one of the highlights in the collections of the Morgan Library & Museum. 'Holy Family at Work' Ms M917 p149; 'Measuring the Timber' Ms M917 p105. The brilliant illuminator remains anonymous but became known for the book as the Master of Catherine of Cleves.
- 160 Apocalypse 22:13 the water and tree of life "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end"
- 161 1st Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:11 and 13:12 "We see now... face to face". Jane Mary of Maillé d1414, was known for her vision of the Christ child with five wounds gushing with blood in the elevated host. Also Walter S Gibson 'Bosch's Boy with a whirligig: some iconographical speculations' *Simiolus* vol 8/1 1975/6 pp13-15 points to the popularity of devotional images of the period with the suffering Christ child in "Dutch books of hours", German woodcuts (citing an example of one child with a striding pose and complete nudity, with the inscription 'Many days have [I] carried this heavy cross') and the vision of a prostitute, Catherine, in which a child appeared bearing the "instruments of the Passion" to tell her "I show unto you, that from the first hour of my conception unto my death, I bore continually this pain in my heart, which for they sake was so great... all other children have never suffered that which I suffer for thee".
- 162 Bax 1946 p127
- 163 Miri Rubin *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* 1991 p136. Rubin cites the *Virgin and Child before a Firescreen* by a follower of Robert Campin c1440 (now in the National Gallery in London, see illustration 58) as a more benign representation "where Christ is handled in a gesture of offering but is surrounded by a domestic setting without the sign of blood, or the threat of violent instruments". A fragment of a larger painting, during the 19th century it was extensively restored, at times amended, a chalice inserted to hide the child's genitalia, and even added to – two strips of wood were fixed to the top and right side. Naked to emphasise Christ's humanity, there was a limit to how much humanity Victorian England would allow.
- 164 Thomas à Kempis *Imitatio* II, I, vol II p225 "Si enim ad vulnera et preciosa stigmata ihesu devote confugis, magnam tribulationem confortacionem senties"
- 165 Anton Chekhov *The Cherry Orchard* end of Act II, Trofimov to Anya
- 166 Jeanne van Waadeniojen 'The Lisbon Triptych by Jeroen Bosch: an annotation Study' *Jérôme Bosch et son entourage et son autres études. Colloque XIV September Bruges-Rotterdam* 2001 Hélène Verougstraete et Roger van Schoute (eds) 2001 p21
- 167 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p358
- 168 Kneeling to pray is not universal. Despite many references in the Bible (Luke 22:41, Mark 1:40, 10:17, Acts 7:59, 9:40, 20:36, etc.) there are equally as many that refer to standing at prayer (Mark 11:25, Matthew 6:5, etc.). For Paul, to pray and 'bow the knee' were complementary (Philippians 2:10, Ephesians 3:14, etc.). Gregory the Great wrote of St Benedict uttering his final prayer *stans, erectis*.

Whilst standing has always been, and is still, recognised for public prayer in the tradition of many countries, kneeling for private prayer was common from the 4th century. Penitents were known to pray kneeling while the rest of the faithful stood. During Lent when everyone was a penitent, the whole congregation would kneel during the Divine Mysteries and liturgical prayers. The practice of kneeling during the Consecration was introduced during the Middle Ages as it was for the Elevation. Kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament and at services of Benediction is obligatory, and kneeling is always seen as obligatory for the supplication of penitents, however, this is not universally or consistently practised. Nicaea (325) forbade kneeling on Sundays, and even 50 years later, Augustine was unsure as to standard practice: "Ut autem stantes in illis diebus et omnibus dominicis oremus utrum ubique servetur nescio" (I do not know whether the custom of standing while praying is still observed everywhere, on those days and every Sunday.) At one stage, kneeling to pray was made a punishment, and standing seen as an attitude of praise and thanksgiving, Augustine saw it as a 'joy'.
- 169 Charles D Cuttler 'Witchcraft in a Work by Bosch' *The Art Quarterly* vol XX 1957 pp129-140. For a similar perspective with regards Bruegel see Renate Vervoort *Vrouwen op den besem en dergelyck ghespook. Pieter Bruegel en de traditie van hekserijvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden tussen 1450 en 1700* 2011
- 170 Forget asceticism. Diane Wolfthal has given views of medieval coupling a twist *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* 2010, a book that states "in the 15th century marriage was often constructed as the opposite of adultery" as she charts the hostility of the Church towards marriage.
- 171 The quote, that would serve equally well for Bosch, is from the speech made by Pope John Paul II at the beatification of Blessed Giovanni da Fiesole, the patron saint of artists, more commonly known as Fra Angelico, 3 October 1982.
- 172 Alexander Pope *An Essay on Man* 1734: heroic couplets that popularised optimistic philosophy across Europe
- 173 Margaret A Sullivan *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance* 1994 p2
- 174 Reputedly Michelangelo, commenting on Flemish painting as recorded by Francesco de Holanda c1540
- 175 Hippolyte Taine compared Michelet to Delacroix, everything in his writing being so thickly textured and dramatic.
- 176 Today, there are just 400 gondolas in Venice, yet the waters are ever more congested with every kind of craft from motoscafi and vaporetta, emergency service boats, excavators, garbage transport, to wherries and sandoli (the 'donkey carts of Venice') and a few traghetto that still exist to ferry people across the canals.
- 177 Peter Ackroyd *Venice: Pure City* 2009 p103
- 178 James Snyder *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* 1985 revised edition 2005 Larry Silver & Henry Luttikhuisen p523
- 179 Pero Tafur from Castile visited the Low Countries in the second half of the 15th century after travelling extensively in Europe, the Levant and North Africa. It was Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels that seemed to have impressed him the most as cosmopolitan cities with the greatest range of luxury goods and works of art available. It was in Bruges that he noted greater commercial activity than Venice: "... there is nothing which one could desire which is not found here in abundance" *Travels and Adventures* p204
- 180 Peter Stabel, Bruno Blondé, Anke Greve (eds) 'International Trade in the Low Countries (14th-16th Centuries): Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure' *Studies in Urban, Social, Economic and Political History of the Medieval and Modern Low Countries* 10, 2000 p31
- 181 L Gilliodts-van Severin *Cartulaire de l'ancien Consulat d'Espagne à Bruges* 1901 p42 quoting a letter of 1450

- 182 Herman Pleij 'Antwerp Described' *Antwerp. Story of a Metropolis* Jan Van der Stock (ed) 1993 p82, Elizabeth Alice Honig *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* 1999 appendix A pp218-28 text of the Mechelen *landjuweel* presentation of 1561
- 183 Ludovico Guicciardini *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* 1567 pp114-115. By the second half of the 15th century the Burgundian cities of Bruges, Brussels and Antwerp had a greater concentration of artists than anywhere else in Europe. Smaller than Venice, Milan or Seville, and no larger than Florence, Genoa or London, the southern Netherlands could nevertheless satisfy the demands of Philip the Good when he recruited 180 artists in 1425, and again in 1468 when he hired 163 painters and 29 sculptors. By the middle of the 16th century it has been estimated that a third of the population of Brussels was engaged in tapestry weaving – 15,000 people. (See Thomas Campbell *Tapestry in the Renaissance* 2002 p79) Between 1454 and 1530 the image-makers' guild in Bruges registered 304 new masters and 374 apprentices, 177 masters were registered 1454-75 alone. (See Wim Blockmans 'The Creative Environment' *Petrus Christus* Maryan W Ainsworth (ed) 1994 p14) In Antwerp between 1453 and 1579 the guild of image-makers included 671 figurative painters, 230 printers and bookbinders, 165 sculptors and 181 glaziers out of a total of 1985 members registered in this period. The total includes registered apprentices, and some artists such as Gerard David who registered in order to sell in the market. (See N Peeters and MPJ Martens 'Masters and Servants: Workshop Assistants in Antwerp Artist's Workshops (1453-1579) a Statistical Approach to Workshop Size and Labour Division' *La peinture ancienne et ses procédés: Copies, répliques, pastiches – Le dessin sous-jacent et la technologie dans la peinture, Colloque XV* H Verougstraete, R van Schoute and A Dubois (eds) 2006 pp115-120) As trained artists who for whatever reason did not become registered as masters are not included in the lists, the real numbers of artists working in all these towns and cities must have been even higher.
- 184 Francesco de Holanda *Four Dialogues on Painting* transl AFG Bell 1928 and *Diálogos em Roma* J de Felicidade Alves (ed) 1984 pp29-30
- 185 Cardinal Antoine Perronet de Granvelle, trusted advisor to Philip II, until 1564 President of the Council of State, owned one of the most remarkable collections of his time. When his archiepiscopal palace at Malines was sacked in 1572 his main concern was the art, specifically the recovery or replacement of the paintings by Bruegel. Other than the renowned connoisseur Nicolaes Jonghelinck we know of no other patron. How could someone with the views that Bruegel held, that were at the very least sceptical and questioning to the point of being unorthodox, and who associated with an equally unorthodox clan associate with Granvelle? Firstly he was a customer, something never to be forgotten, and as such he was both a future customer and might be an important influence on other potential customers. As much as his work might invite criticism for its content, it was valued and admired to the extent that after his death its popularity constantly increased, production of copies and imitations going into overdrive. Artists like Rubens owned 11 or 12, Pieter Stevens had 11, insatiable collectors such as Rudolph II, and his brother the Archduke Ernst, who from 1593-5 was Governor of the Netherlands, could not get enough. When the question of Bruegel's connection to Granvelle arises we might well compare it to Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting the greatest orchestra in the world, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the degree to which he collaborated with an even more evil empire; the ambiguity of his life, the compromises he and his colleagues made, the struggles some of them would have had to make with their consciences, leading inevitably, sadly, and too late, to the realisation that you cannot do deals with tyrants. In that, Furtwängler was naïve. Yet the orchestra was on the verge of bankruptcy in 1933, it needed finance, and he was therefore prepared to bargain his artistic freedom as a price worth paying to keep the orchestra together. His tragedy was that he was Hitler's favourite conductor, and, having led the best in the world, if, as many with the benefit of hindsight now suggest, he had left Germany at that point, anything else would have been seen by him as failure. Because we know who was in the audience when the live recording of Beethoven's 5th was made in 1943, music about liberation and humanity and freedom, it can be difficult to listen to now. Furtwängler never joined the Nazi Party, and helped a lot of Jews to leave Germany, but the deal he made, effectively selling the orchestra to a totalitarian regime as a propaganda instrument whilst ensuring its long-term viability, nevertheless sealed

his reputation in the eyes of many. He saved the world's greatest orchestra, but at what a price? Aware of its precarious nature in the immediate post-war period, there was to be no Wagner, no Bruckner's 7th – its first concert was music by a composer banned under the Third Reich, Felix Mendelssohn. In his coming to terms with moral ambiguity, balancing desperation and opportunism, fear and reticence, we get just a sense of Bruegel's predicament. Faced with the same predicament, we should always ask ourselves, what would we have done? It takes great courage to oppose a totalitarian state from within. As Paul Valéry expressed it in *Analects* in 1926 transl Stuart Gilbert 1971, "The point is to give value to the man, just as he is, whatever he may be."

2

The Spirit of the Age I

The Pillars Crack

Christianity: the matrix of life, warfare and politics

Did printing change the world?

The Old World Ends

To fully appreciate and understand the work of Bosch and Bruegel a grasp of the historical background to the creation of their art is essential. However, this is not a simple task. It is a tapestry of multiple stories: some overlapping, many interwoven, some even contradictory. Yet this complex set of tales is well worth exploring. Cutting a clear path through the maze, and in order to avoid constant digressions that might stifle the narrative, I have set out some of the historical, social and theological material that underpin this book in two chapters to give the context in which both artists address questions of inner life, faith and politics as articulately as any of their contemporaries.

The Pillars Crack

"Sometimes decades pass and nothing happens; and then sometimes weeks pass and decades happen" Lenin

ONCE AGAIN, there was little optimism for humanity.¹ Jheronimus Bosch was born into an age of chivalry and princely splendour, courtly romance, ribald tales, tournaments and pageants, richness and gusto, Gothic cathedrals, cloistered religious orders and superbly illuminated manuscripts. It was also an age of feudalism, chaos and ferocity, social disruption, collapsing assumptions and the cult of death. Freebooting companies of brigands terrorised the land destroying whatever plague and famine passed by. Violent and tormented, it was a time when, finally, Satan appeared about to triumph. Europe was spinning towards its doom.

The age of chivalry was crumbling under the impact of new weapons, new tactics and knightly folly. The Papacy having recovered from a schism that tore the Christian world apart was feeling totally secure and in control, yet it too had drifted far away from its ideals and was totally unprepared for its greatest challenge. It did not know it, but the Papacy had reached the high tide of its temporal power, but it was already at the lowest ebb of its spiritual authority. Centuries of assumptions were collapsing throughout the lifetime of Bosch and those centuries of certainty finally disintegrated in the lifetime of Pieter Bruegel. Tragically, the extremes of the Dark Ages never abated.² The emphasis changed but the horrors continued unabated. It is all in the pictures.

Chaos and social disruption

The forces set in motion in the 14th century were still playing themselves out at the time of the birth of Bosch, some of them in exaggerated form. The Black Death disappeared, warfare recommenced, marauding mobs resumed their enterprise, the cult of death grew more extreme, efforts to rid the Church of its abuses more desperate. Depopulation reached its lowest point in a society already weakened both physically and morally. Peasants escaped the countryside seeking refuge and security in the towns where they imagined people led a better life. But in desolate, overcrowded, vermin-filled camps and hovels they found people no better off than themselves, living undernourished lives in the shadows where epidemics were rife, the threat of typhus or leprosy as great as the plague, and declining trade and manufacture responsible for unemployment and antagonism toward the refugees.

The cult of death flourished at its most morbid during the lifetime of Bosch. An earlier medieval text was still a match for *Death and the Miser* by Bosch: "The devils haunt us most of all on our death bed. They ride like motes in the sunbeam; they are scattered everywhere like dust; they come down upon us like rain; their multitude fills the whole world; the whole air, the whole air I say, is but a thick mass of devils. Yet they can do nothing against the sign of the Cross."³ As the years passed, the obsession with death increased. Death, the great leveller of social and religious status, was a patron of the arts. "Statues of St Roch and other saints invoked against the plague and various forms of sudden death multiplied in the churches; the fashion for naked, skeletal effigies spread. Artists dwelt on physical rot in ghoulish detail: worms wriggled through every corpse, bloated toads sat on dead eyeballs. A beckoning, mocking, gleeful Death led the parade of the *Danse Macabre* around innumerable frescoed walls. A literature of dying expressed itself in popular treatises on *Ars Moriendi*, the Art of Dying, with scenes of deathbed, doctors and notaries in attendance, hovering families, shrouds and coffins, grave-diggers whose spades uproot the bones of earlier dead, finally the naked corpse awaiting God's judgement while angels and vicious black devils dispute over its soul. The staging of plays and mysteries went to extremes of the horrid, as if people needed ever more excess to experience the thrill

of disgust. The rape of virgins enacted with startling realism; in realistic dummies the body of Christ was viciously cut and hacked by soldiers, or a child was roasted and eaten by its mother.”⁴ Such were the entertainments available at the end of the Middle Ages.

A new dawn?

Historians today like to say that people in the 15th century knew that Christendom was in crisis. Did they? There is certainly an air of fatalism about the period. The Byzantine Church was little more than a rump of its former glory. The Holy Roman Empire was unable to exert influence over other kingdoms or its own subjects and the Papacy had fallen into a quagmire of political independence. Bandits, superstition and the plague ruled the world. “According to a popular belief, no-one since the beginning of the great Western Schism had entered Paradise” wrote Johan Huizinga.⁵

When the Black Death struck it was obvious to everyone that God was punishing Christians. “The violent contrasts and impressive forms lent a tone of excitement and passion to everyday life, and tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy, between cruelty and pious tenderness, which characterises the Middle Ages.”⁶

The waning medieval twilight still cast its shadows over a cruel world; lepers with rattles, beggars in churches, public executions, hellfire sermons, dwarves, magicians, religious processions, the stench of the streets – the children of the plague inhabited a world desperately in need of change and, despite the claims of Renaissance scholars, they had no awareness of a new dawn.

The past lived on in the continuing outbreaks of chronic infectious diseases and crippling congenital malformations. Many symptoms of plague and ergot poisoning are similar. They co-existed. Frequently the plague followed outbreaks of rye ergot, ergotism being an immunosuppressant. It made people more vulnerable. The deleterious side-effects can be observed in the paintings of Bosch. As Jan Dequeker of the University Hospitals, Leuven, has shown, the arts, in combination with historical data, may provide a tool for paleopathological research because “medicine is an observational skill and artists are good observers”.⁷ Dequeker has used the paintings to demonstrate how through acute observation Bosch catalogued clinical signs of specific medical disorders, crippling diseases deformed by reality and by the artist’s imagination. Stimulating that study and scrutiny may well have been the lead stories of the day that give some idea of the prevailing disorders and attitudes.

Inspiration there certainly is in the descriptive power of narrative; people dropping dead in the street from the plague, dying in their homes unattended by family, partners living separate lives within their own homes for fear of infection, mothers leaving their children, the shops empty, churches shut, as “Florentines carried the bodies of the recently deceased out of their houses and put them down by the front doors, where anyone passing by, especially in the morning, could have seen them, by the thousand... When all the graves were full, enormous trenches were dug in the cemeteries of the churches, into which the new arrivals were put by the hundreds, stowed layer upon layer like merchandise in ships, each one covered with a little earth, until the top of the trench was reached.”⁸ With a reporter’s sensibility, the particular combination of intimacy and objectivity, a winning voice and brutal candour, Boccaccio turned what he saw around him into a story that meant something to a wider audience. If Dante was a possible source of inspiration for Bosch, the same may be asked of Boccaccio, the author who gave the name ‘divine’ to a poem originally known simply as ‘the comedy’. Whereas Dante focused on the afterlife, in the *Decameron* Boccaccio focussed on this world, life here and now. Certainly not divine, this was a human comedy – a *commedia umana*.

Like Dante, Boccaccio too wrote in the vernacular, modelled on late-medieval Latin narrative style, and so we have the same problem. Would Bosch have had access to a text that

he could understand? Written between 1348 and 1352 the Middle Ages were by no means over, the conventions of courtly love still endured, silk gowns nestle against embroidered doublets, the *carola* danced, and ornate speeches delivered, alongside rude tales of adultery set in an earthy Renaissance world of reality, one where faith is certainly not the same as its worldly representatives in the Church. The book focuses on facts, and love of the world in which we live, God's world. It is an early expression of literary realism, one in which the foremost master of sexual euphemism in, arguably, the dirtiest great book in the western canon, may have an echo in Bosch. In the *Decameron* Alberto Moravia saw a world indifferent to ethics, one where insatiable adventure counted for more than morals "like the tiny *natures mortes*, corners of landscapes, and background-figures of some fourteenth-, fifteenth- and sixteenth century painters. Action, pure action, without intended meaning or ethics, gains depth, lucidity and mystery from those details that no amount of serious moral intention could give it."⁹

That Bosch could have known the story is easier to imagine than the question of his access to Dante. After meeting the foremost Italian representative of renaissance humanism, Petrarch, in 1350, Boccaccio was influenced by the return to ancient values and literature, translating his story into Latin, travelling on diplomatic missions for the government of Florence, before turning to the priesthood in 1360. In life as in his writing the new world embraced the old.¹⁰

Government by duty, heritage and right

Feudal society was hierarchical in the extreme. The feudal ladder comprised a contractual network that linked the highest in the land to the lowest. Every man had a lord except the Pope and the Emperor who both reported to God. The sovereign had a contract with the rulers in the provinces who in turn contracted with vassals who acted as lords to their inferiors and so on down the line.¹¹ Feudalism affected the life of the Church deeply. It weakened central authority, empowered local lords, put the clergy at its mercy – bishops became barons in mitres. Lords of the manor granted serfs land in return for unpaid labour. It was not as neat and tidy as this might suggest. The incompatibility of the system arose from the tension created by vassals who, as members of a knight's family, were sworn to their lord, but who as lords in their own right wanted to pursue their own interests. The system was in reality a confusion of obligations, loyalties, disputed rights, dependencies, exemptions, and contested privileges.

It was a mess. But it was a mess in which everyone knew their position in the social order. What it in fact meant was that wherever you were in that social order, you were not free.¹² You were vulnerable to exploitation and felt powerless. Powerless, not only because of your social situation but because of the preoccupation with religion, the afterlife and therefore death.

The Middle Ages has become one of the more prevalent myths of the modern world, a fantasy land, a timeless world where there was no sense of historical development, an era created by novelists, painters and movie makers of a period of history that never existed, a land once written off as "a thousand years without a bath".¹³ It has become symbolised by feudal knights, serfs tied to their lords, monks and nuns at prayer. Everyone was waiting, not only those in cloistered retreats. They were not at all sure what they were waiting for.

Early modern society was not concerned with questions of class but with social order. Basic social groups were defined by their function and the privileges bestowed by various institutions. Wealth and income played a secondary role to heredity. Descendants of medieval nobility remained the backbone of the ruling classes but those of medieval knights, defined by their military function, dwindled away as standing armies grew larger. Princes, peers and grandees had their ranks and positions as did the burgher estates, protected by royal charters, built on the liberties of self-governing cities and of the city guilds, were stratified with patricians, freemen and the rest. The peasantry were either serfs or emerging from serfdom.

Social constraints were onerous. The individualism perceived as part of the Renaissance began within a system of social compartments that could not be overturned. Nobility governed by duty, heritage and habit and, as they saw it, by right. They were superior. While renunciation of any belief in money, possessions and sex was professed, medieval society was recognisable as an age of conspicuous consumption and sensual pleasure. This was the end of the age of chivalry and splendour.

The battle for existence

The precariousness and brevity of life¹⁴ were the result of the battle for existence being fought against insidious forms of disease, high infant mortality rates and also against the scarcity and inadequacy of food. People had to adapt to chronic shortages. Agriculture was the largest industry in pre-industrial Europe but it was an industry that was always in trouble. It seems that there were makeshift economic ventures with declining yields, reliant on navigable rivers for transportation. One bad harvest might be possible to survive but two sent prices rocketing and famine would set in.

This in turn led to epidemics, undernourishment on all evidence being a multiplying factor in the spread of diseases that had their own cycle. Plague was a fixture, a permanent part of life; it could only lead to the Dance of Death. The undernourished, unprotected population had little resistance to it, whatever form it took.¹⁵ Below the poverty level there is little documentation that tells us about the circles of hell inhabited by vagrants and beggars. Bruegel's painting of 1568 showed crippled beggars wearing chasubles and strange headgear, a mitre, a paper hat, a red cylinder, leading the Carnival procession through the streets.¹⁶

The poor lived in a state of almost total deprivation. They had very few possessions. Before the 18th century their possessions consisted of next to nothing: a few clothes, a stool, an old barrel that served as a table, a bench, a few planks of a bed, sacks filled with straw.¹⁷ Adrian Brouwer (1605-38) was still painting such scenes half a century after the death of Bruegel. Most people died destitute. Poverty was everywhere. Montaigne wrote that there were no fireplaces in Germany; specifically there were no fireplaces in the bedrooms, or living rooms, of inns. There was one in the kitchen. Travellers would warm themselves in a living area where meals were taken and where a *Kachelhofen* or earthenware stove, stood.¹⁸ For the better off, the *Birth of St John* by Jan van Eyck or an *Annunciation* by Van der Weyden give the atmosphere of a 15th century living room.¹⁹ Furniture painted as lovingly as people, a series of still lives in spaces where a door will open onto a series of other rooms, evocative of domestic scenes as a painting of the Last Supper will convey the mealtime ritual. Privacy came later. It was an innovation of the 18th century. Before that, reception rooms were all purpose, everyone passing through them 'to get to the stairs' as Braudel phrased it.

The world turned upside down and the triumph of Lent over Carnival

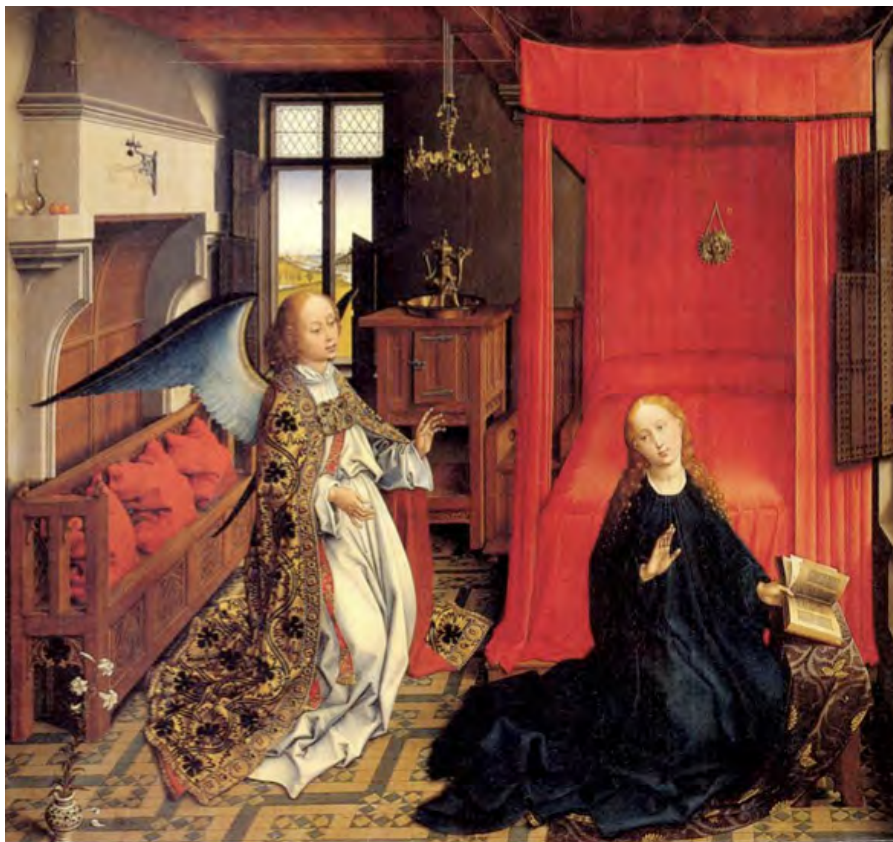
Fairs meant noise, tumult, music, popular rejoicing, the world turned upside down, disorder and sometimes disturbances.²⁰ People certainly got their money's worth. As the jokers, fortune-tellers, jugglers, tooth-pullers invaded a town, travelling salesmen with every kind of wonder drug and miracle cure, travelling players and musicians, gaming tables, every kind of pleasure-seeking low life was attracted to play their part. It was a reversal of everyday life. Entertainment, extravagance and escapism were present in equal measure. Processions, spectacles, popular amusements, and serious business were all there. Fairs were wholesale markets with popular participation. Everyone was welcome and nearly everyone had something to sell, however much they might be there to enjoy themselves. There would be cheap perishable goods, luxury items, livestock, wines and silks; anything and everything until gradually the fairs tended to specialise.



40 Hand G (attributed to Jan van Eyck) *The Birth of John the Baptist* Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Turin



41 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Beggars* Musée du Louvre, Paris



42 Rogier van der Weyden *Annunciation* Musée du Louvre, Paris

The heyday of fairs was the 14th century, their fortunes waxed and waned until they were seriously revived in the 16th by which time they had become a kind of club; there was little trade but literally masses of bills of exchange, with payments by the Spanish Empire the mainstream. As soon as the presses rolled there were book fairs. Merchant houses developed the fairs for their own ends as an instrument for large-scale trade. Fairs were artificial, temporary towns where traders could meet to settle accounts. Bills of exchange converged on a fair in a calendar of successive gatherings based on mutual dependence. Goods, money and credit were in perpetual motion between meetings. By the time Amsterdam took over from Antwerp as the business capital of Europe, the fairs had seen their best days.

Carnival was wild. Normal social values disappeared. Moral licence went unabated in the week before Lent. Half religious, half secular, the excessive drinking and sex meant it became known as *duivelsweek*, devil's week. Preachers would attempt to take advantage of the situation by shocking people into repentance and the true love of God by playing their trump card for toppling human pretensions: death. This could be particularly demoralising if the priest was clever enough to have discreetly obtained the names beforehand of those recently dead. By calling out their names and asking if they were present, meeting the response that they were all dead, he had the perfect opening to remind people of human frailty, the terrors of hell. Yet this was a religion that could at times involve fun, noise and entertainment in church, ritual fighting with devils at Easter, door slamming to bar the devils' paths, buckets of water being thrown at Whitsun, flaming torches for hellfire, a strong faith within which people were relaxed enough to be at times, excessively, if only in passing, irreverent.

By the middle of the 16th century the brooding threat of the Last Days had grown so much as to instil a mood of sombre penitence. That triumph was as much the work of Calvin as the Jesuits. It has been described as the symbolic triumph of Lent over Carnival.²¹ It is also hard to avoid the suspicion that thoroughgoing Protestants in particular had succeeded in their determination to create a society that corresponded to the HL Mencken's definition of Puritanism: "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy".

Christianity: the matrix of life, warfare and politics

"Organised religion came into existence, and exists, to preserve a treasure, a command to be executed, a promise to be repeated, a mission to be fulfilled. This treasure belongs to past, present, and future; it is potential, yet active; an object of contemplation, yet the inspiration of right conduct. An unfathomable mystery, it must be related to all knowledge. And in their endeavours to guard and transmit their trust, its guardians have raised the most perplexing issues. They have caused endless destruction of life in the name of universal peace."

Maurice Powicke²²

TODAY, WE HAVE depression, famine, disasters, pandemics, and tsunamis. In the 15th century things were different. They had the hand of God. We should not be surprised at the strength of feeling that belief provoked. All religions evolve. The secret of Christianity's genius and the source of its strength has been its ability to find in the Bible what it needs in order to re-form and adapt to meet all contingencies. To be able to adapt is strength in a religion, just as much as in a species.

The New Testament has it all. 'Christ the King for the imperial church, suffering for the Middle Ages, quietness and humility for those who find that path to God, radical protest for revolutionaries, the Apocalypse for the apocalyptic and so on. In recent years, when the western world has made a religion out of personal relationships, the emphasis has been on the message of love in the gospels. Where socialism takes hold, the emphasis is on sharing. The strength of

Christianity has been its ability to adapt to changing circumstance.’²³

The greatest difficulty in entering the mind and emotional values of the Middle Ages is the Christian religion. No matter how devout people are today that belief is one that the modern world does not share. The rupture of that belief and its replacement by valuing an individual’s worth and an active life on earth, one not necessarily focused on God, is what finally created the modern world and put an end to the Middle Ages. For the most part of the life of Bosch, from 1450 to 1500 the Church faced general anxieties, serious disquiet and even protests – what some have termed a pre-Reformation. But that protesting attitude was in no way bound to lead to Protestantism.²⁴ The tide began to turn on the medieval dream of the universal Church at Avignon, the setting for what Petrarch termed the ‘Babylonian Exile’ of the Church and the beginning of its demoralisation.²⁵ The Great Schism of 1378-1417 then only underlined the need for searching, excoriating reform. Doctrinal challenges from John Wyclif, who saw the Mass as a devilish perversion of a spiritual gift of God, and Jan Hus, who turned a religious revival into a national crusade, were precursors of medieval unity about to break apart.²⁶

One topic of European politics

This religious drama reached its climax with the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the segmentation of Christendom and the collapse of Rome’s Eastern Empire.²⁷ For the lifetime of both Bosch and Bruegel and for a hundred years afterwards the one topic of European politics was to be the Turk. Until the relief of Vienna by troops commanded by Jan Sobieski in 1683, the empire created by one of the most remarkable men in oriental history, “the drinker of blood” Sultan Mahomet II (1451-1481), held sway. From the Danube to the Taurus and from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, he had created Turkey in Europe and so bequeathed to Europe the Ottoman problem.²⁸ So frightening did this problem become that when the Turkish fleet was destroyed at Lepanto in 1571 Venetians proclaimed that the Devil himself was dead.

Where unity had once guided the Christian church, division now became a principle. Whereas Mahomet showed toleration to the Orthodox Church, Rome viewed its once Eastern Empire as utterly degraded by the dead weight of Turkish ignorance and brutality, a place where fields went uncultivated, industries were lost, family life undermined, the people reduced to cattle and morality emasculated.²⁹ When on 6 July 1449 Emperor Constantine XI assumed the Imperial throne, an empire that had once extended over the whole of the Balkans, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Cyrenaica had shrunk to little more than Constantinople and the clergy and nobles servile towards the Sultan.³⁰ In this Age of Faith religion had become politics and religious union a political question.³¹

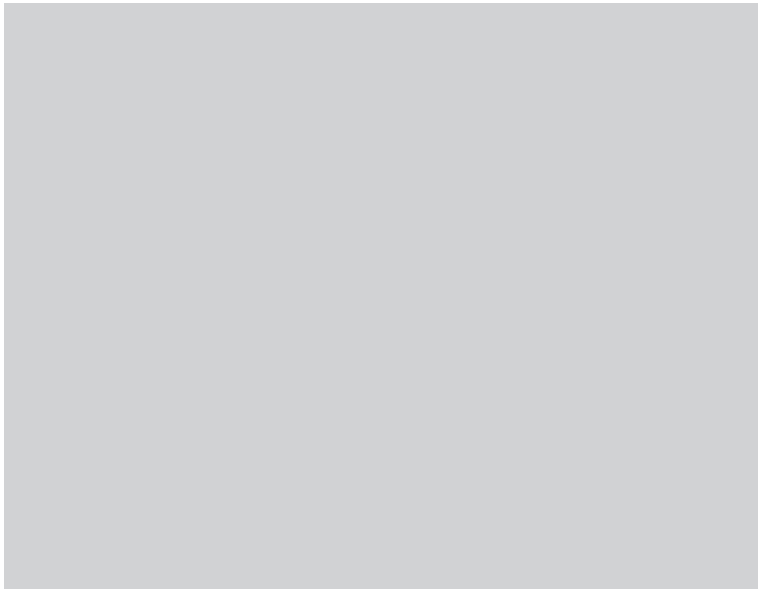
“War is sown from war”³²

The three great technological innovations in the second half of the 15th century were artillery, printing and ocean navigation.³³ They were all revolutionary in their day. New developments spread gradually in the Middle Ages, nevertheless, these three spread rapidly and they all impacted art.

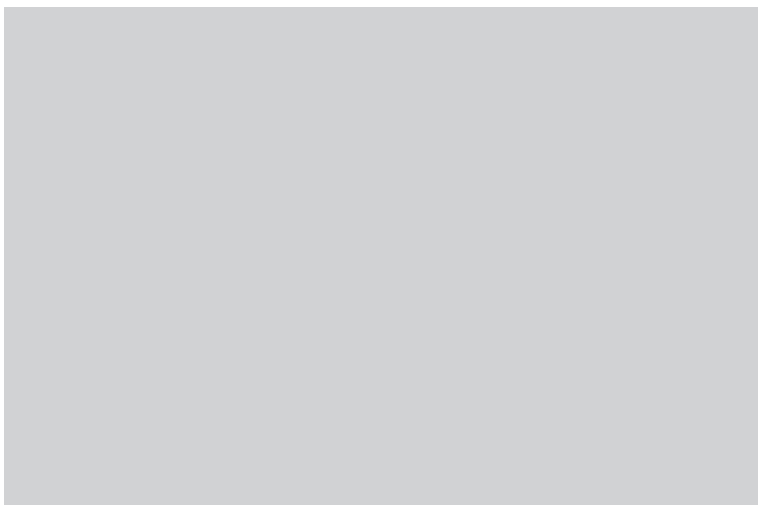
In the Middle Ages, Western Europe was a society geared for war.³⁴ The whole social and economic order was moulded around the demands of warfare, one of the main objectives of the feudal system being the maintenance of a force of armoured knights.³⁵ In the history of warfare, the fall of Constantinople was a watershed. It proved that gunpowder could batter down the strongest walls and the age of immobile, iron-clad soldiers defending big stone fortresses was over. But far more was over than that. Gunpowder changed the medieval Christian way of life. War passed into a technological era, valour gave way to a mechanical art and the superior weapon was the more formidable foe regardless of social status or courage. Contact

with Islam may have given rise to the Renaissance but gunpowder shattered the medieval order of things, both physically and morally. War as a trial of moral values by battle in which the Church refereed on behalf of God, gave way to a different certainty, where war was the means to a political end and the deciding factor was power. Idealism gave way to realism. Gunpowder blasted the feudal strongholds and its owners' ideals sky high.³⁶

When the largest bombard finally blasted a way into Constantinople after 53 days it blew away more than the first of three lines of defence.³⁷ The Roman Empire ceased to exist. A web of mostly tiny principalities that was, in Voltaire's description, neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire, was nevertheless swept away. For the Christian world this really was a 9/11 moment. People wept in the streets of Rome. Songs, poems and diatribes were penned against the Turk. A whole body of work developed about the 'terrible Turk' for whom it was particularly bad luck to have arrived on the scene at the particular moment just as printing was being developed. History was about to be written by the losers.



43 attributed to
Maitre du Froissart de
Philippe de Commines,
Master of the Harley
Froissart c1475 *Siege of
Constantinople* from *Chronique
de Charles VII* of Jean
Chartier. BnF Fr 2691 folio
CCXLVI v



44 Granada, painted wall
tiles (from the 20th century)
showing the fall of the city
in 1492

“The Papacy was the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire”³⁸

The end of the world had come nearer. All Christians saw themselves living in a period of time between Christ’s First and Second Coming. Organised Christianity defined the medieval world. It filled the vacuum left by the decline of the Roman Empire both as religious community and political entity. The Church began its agonisingly slow journey away from total control and terrestrial power and into the private world of conscience. As a result, the speculations of theologians, scientists, philosophers, artists and writers were freed from the control of the Church. It no longer had a monopoly on thought or power over princes and kingdoms. The Renaissance came therefore to symbolise far more than the word itself implies; far more than rebirth or resurrection from the dead. It came to symbolise liberation and independence of mind. Its ideal was *l’uomo universale*.³⁹ The conviction grew that humanity could master its environment. That was the real break with the past. Gradually men and women began to see that they were not pawns of Providence, inadequate, ignorant and overwhelmed by a sense of sin. The fears and inhibitions that had such a hold over people began to be thrown off.

Intellectual ferment swept the continent, giving a new lease of life to the Latin west. Humanist thought, reformation theology, scientific discovery and overseas exploration tend to obscure the fact that magic competed with religion, that this was an era of alchemy, astrology, miracles, conjuring, witchcraft, necromancy, ghosts, folk cures, omens and fairies; that it was an age of vagrancy, poverty, disease and crude colonialism. Over it all floated Botticelli’s ethereal *Venus*, her feet not touching the ground on which the real world struggled to survive.⁴⁰ Over it all, a landscape populated with Boschian monsters, also strode Bruegel’s aggressive *Dulle Griet*, as Karel van Mander phrased it in 1604, “looking at the mouth of Hell”.

Granada

A range of forces propelled Europe out of the medieval world and into the early modern era by the end of the 15th century. That transition was marked by two of the decisive battles of the western world, the siege and fall of Constantinople and Granada.⁴¹ Their influence on history marked a decisive shift in the strategic confrontation between Christianity and Islam. Defeated in the east, Christianity was finally victorious in the west. The consequences were immense.

The *Reconquista* of the Muslim Kingdom of Granada finally ended on 2 January 1492 with the triumphal entry into the city by Ferdinand and Isabella.⁴² Victory ushered in the Atlantic period of western history and the whole outlook of Europe was about to be changed. Wedged between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, Spain stood at the gate to the old world and was now potentially the strategic hub of a new world system, ready to replace the hub that had been lost in 1453. It was ideally located to exploit that world. No other kingdom was so well placed at the time to expand into a great empire. The conquistadors would soon do just that; in creating a new world they would transform the old one and imperialism would begin to assume its modern colonial complexion.⁴³ The fall of Granada was witnessed by a Genoese sailor looking for a sponsor, Cristoforo Colombo. After the fall of Granada he struck a deal.⁴⁴

The Old World set sail around the earth to discover the New. Discovery of the new would liberate them all from the past. Whether Columbus was a hero or a charlatan or both, in geopolitical terms the discovery of the New World freed the Mediterranean world from possible blockade by Islam, horizons expanded and men felt themselves free. With an extension of dominion over new lands and seas, Western Europe was liberated and a New Man was born, just as surely as he was with the Reformation. The retrospective vision of today’s Columbus detractors, richly fuelled by moral indignation cannot, however, deny that with its command of the seas, Iberian explorers dealt Spain and Portugal a winning hand in 16th century global politics. Medieval civilisations had been land-based and contact by sea relatively unimportant. With the voyages of discovery a new era in world history was heralded as Europe pushed out

into the world. By establishing direct sea contact between continents the stage of history was extended to a theatre in the round and a European age begun as the continent was poised to gain control of much of the globe.

The greatest surprise in history⁴⁵

The European voyages of discovery mark a watershed between the medieval and modern worlds. Between the discovery of America in 1492 and the circumnavigation of the globe in 1519-1522 Europe gained command of the high seas and world supremacy.⁴⁶ Medieval civilisation had been focused on the land and contact by sea was relatively unimportant. From 1500 direct sea contact was established between continents. Whilst Europe was to remain closer to its agrarian past than its industrial future for the next three centuries, the stage had been set for the European age of history and for 300 years of conquest, settlement, colonialism and the emergence of a global community.

Ocean navigation was Europe's competitive advantage.⁴⁷ The greatest difficulty was to conquer a fear of the unknown.⁴⁸ The courage required to set sail was considerably greater than that of astronauts in the 20th century. Setting sail to the edge of the earth, some of them surely did believe that they would soon have "slipped the surly bonds of earth" to "touch the face of God".⁴⁹ When they did set sail, these adventurers sailed for reasons of trade, loot, conquest and religion. And discovery was a matter of trial and error. They were taking a chance, expanding man's horizons, literally. The future never belonged to the fainthearted.

News of extraordinary new lands, strange animals, riches beyond belief and a fourth continent swept across Europe. Columbus wrote that he had "reached the Indies where he found very many islands filled with people without number."⁵⁰ He wrote of trees that touched the skies, birds of a thousand kind, lands rich for sowing and natural harbours "you could not believe". He promised gold and spices, cotton, slaves and rhubarb!⁵¹

Das Narrenschiff

With amazing letters from the men at sea, a book was published two years after Columbus' voyage west, an allegorical fable about a vessel sailing to a fool's paradise that the author called Narragonia. *Das Narrenschiff*, The Ship of Fools, was written by the editor of Columbus' letter, Sebastian Brant and contains a reference to discoveries beyond the "Western Ocean": To lands by Portugal discovered /To golden isles which Spain uncovered /With brownish natives in the nude /We never knew such vastitude.

Brant's ship is a moral vessel with over a hundred fools aboard who represent the ways of the world – immoral monks, drunks, criminals, bent judges, robber knights. Brant portrayed them all in an attempt to demonstrate how the degenerating manners, morals and faith of the people coupled with disloyalty, fear and indecision on the part of the nobility were all leading the Holy Roman Empire towards disintegration. German nobility, magnanimity and orthodoxy had led to the people being rewarded with spiritual and worldly leadership. That position of leadership was being thrown away by bad behaviour.⁵² Fools never reach their destination. Brant called his *Ship* a mirror "where each his counterfeit may see", thus providing a link to Bosch and the *ars moriendi* literature of the time with its 'mirror of sinners'.⁵³

Did printing change the world?
"Texts can produce peoples" Adrian Hastings

AS BYZANTIUM FELL, an event far more pregnant with change took place at the same time. The first document printed from moveable type was produced in 1453-4 by Gutenberg at Mainz, followed in 1454-6 by the first printed book, the Vulgate Bible. This new means of disseminating ideas, knowledge and news spread with un-medieval speed, Victor Hugo later declaring, "the Gothic sun set behind the gigantic printing press of Mainz".⁵⁴

Whether the process attributed to Gutenberg was a discovery, a revival, an imitation or a rediscovery, its realisation changed the world.⁵⁵ What was perhaps even more amazing was that it changed the world without changing much itself for over 300 years.⁵⁶ The spread of the new process was very fast.⁵⁷ As a commodity, books depended on fairs, transportation, trade and money. Production costs were high, money short, and thus distribution became dependent on moneylenders. The Frenchman, Cristophe Plantin (1514-1589) became established in Antwerp and made his fortune from a monopoly granted to him for the production and sale of liturgical and religious works in Spain and its overseas territories.⁵⁸ Erasmus and Luther cannot be imagined without printing. Both learned to write to demand from printers who needed saleable copy. The medium became the message. The printing press had been waiting from this moment.

Whether Luther intended his theses to provoke academic debate or be posted up as a gesture of defiance, became an academic question. They were quickly available to read in German and Latin. It was said that everyone in German-speaking Europe had heard of Luther's protest within a month and that after three months the whole of Europe had heard of him. Nothing like that had ever happened before. The speed at which the news spread was alarming.

Did the Renaissance change the world, did the Reformation or did printing? Did the increased number of Bibles in circulation create the Reformation? The Bible certainly became far better known to everyman than it is today. Printing would break the Church's monopoly on holy writ. It became the most important vehicle for cultural nationalism. Language made for a shared identity and as the oral tradition was extended into printing, vernacular languages in turn contributed towards national identities. In the 15th century, the age of the incunabula, Latin predominated and with it religious and devout literature. With the appearance of Latin and Greek editions of classical writing in the early 16th century, printing began to serve the humanist cause. After that it was put to use by the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. The coming of printing would certainly have changed the shape of religion even if there had been no evangelical challenge to the Church. There were 18 editions of the Bible in German (14 in Hochdeutsch and four in Plattdeutsch) before Luther, and a Dutch Bible when Erasmus was still young. In six years, from 1518 to 1524, the production of printwork increased 600% in Germany.⁵⁹ An astonishingly high percentage of that was written by Luther: 30 titles, perhaps 300,000 copies. With so much information in circulation, progress towards 1521 and Worms was never going to be simply a discussion between monks.

BEFORE PRINTING, scholars had spent a large amount of their time copying texts by hand simply to have access to them. Now there was more time for thinking. The impact of printing went far wider than simply making books available. The Reformation released the vernacular. Yet it was made possible by something immersed in Latin, humanism. Good men expressed themselves in good letters as Erasmus called them. Good letters made good men. Good letters were to be found in Latin and Greek. The re-evaluation of Greek was a Renaissance achievement. Humanism came as much from books as from anywhere. Far from 'New Learning' for a new world, humanism was re-learning from old learning, renaissance. It meant obtaining, studying and reinterpreting the work of ancient Greek and Rome. The spread of literacy and



45 Jheronimus Bosch *Death and the Userer*
Washington, National Gallery of Art

46 Jheronimus Bosch *The Ship of Fools*
Paris, Musée du Louvre

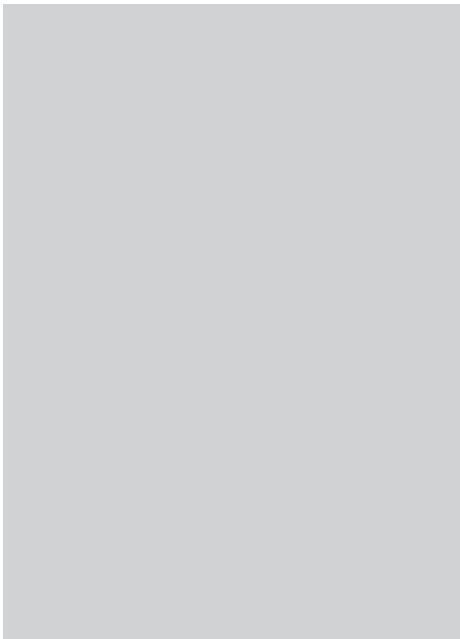
possible centrepiece
The Last Judgement



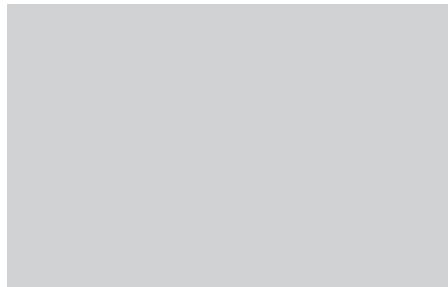
47 Jheronimus Bosch *Allegory of Gluttony*
New Haven, Yale

knowledge of languages moved out beyond the exclusive, cloistered world of the Church to a new and wider world, more open-minded and hungry for words.⁶⁰ The words arrived in the excess baggage of terrorised scholars fleeing west after the fall of Constantinople.⁶¹

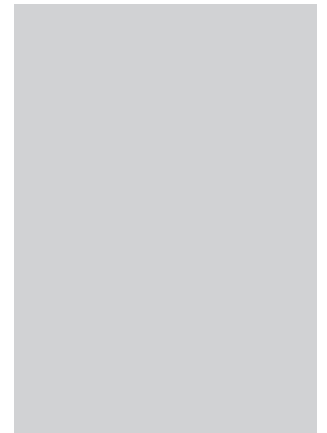
Empires are not sustained on ignorance. Built on bloodshed they survive on knowledge – in the words of Muhammad: “the ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr”. Fascination with secret wisdom and the cosmos were all stimulated by the recovery and dissemination of writings on magic, medicine, mythology, astrology and astronomy, cabalistic mystical Jewish literature, Gnostic ideas, all found a new audience – as did significant forgeries such as the Donation of Constantine that granted sweeping powers to the Pope in the 4th century, and was found to have been produced in the 8th. But it was a genuine 4th century document that came in for the greatest scrutiny, Jerome’s Latin translation, the Vulgate Bible. Western Christianity was based exclusively on this book. Once printed, a wider audience began to compare it with manuscript versions of Latin, Greek (the Septuagint of 2BC), and Hebrew translations of the original, only to find persistent and cumulative errors.⁶² The 16th century fully vindicated the claims of Adrian Hastings that “texts can produce peoples” and that, among texts, the Bible is “the prime lens through which the nation is imagined... a mirror for national self-imagining”.⁶³ The favourite Protestant text was “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God”.⁶⁴ For many, hearing the word was the only means of salvation. There was doubt expressed as to whether deaf people could be saved. Luther said of preaching ‘we do that with our books’, which led to the suggestion that the Reformation was a matter of salvation by print alone.⁶⁵ Religious books were closed books to most people for a generation.⁶⁶ As literacy improved the Reformation succeeded.⁶⁷ This was to be religious change backed by new technology.⁶⁸



48 In a similar format to Gutenberg, the *Great Bible of Mainz*



49 *Great Bible of Mainz* a detail of folio 187r, handwritten in two columns by a single scribe between 4 April 1452 and 9 July 1453. The illuminations were never completed. Together with the initials and borders, they were the work of several artists.



50 Gutenberg’s *Forty-Two Line Bible*. Begun 1452 *Das Werk der Bücher* took around 25 apprentices and assistants nearly three years to complete. 180 copies required more than 16,000 pieces of type, 49,000 sheets of paper and 11,000 sheets of vellum. They sold for 30 florins undecorated and unbound, the buyers having the text rubricated, illuminated and bound.

The Old World Ends

*"We have heard the Chimes at Midnight"*⁶⁹

THE PASSING of feudal Europe into the Renaissance; the decay of scholasticism and the rise of humanism; the over-secularisation of the papacy; the rise of rationalism and absolute monarchies; the introduction of the printing press and the development of firearms; the discovery of the New World and the sea route to India; coupled with the growth of city life, of wealth, luxury and poverty, of commerce, of trading monopolies and usury; the continuous and contentious religious controversies moving from the political to the doctrinal – they all reached a flashpoint in what became the Reformation – the religious expression of general ferment.⁷⁰ The movement in ideas was moving inescapably towards the Protestant secession as discovery of the world and of the self took hold. "The Reformation", wrote Oswald Spengler "abolished the whole bright and consoling side of the Gothic myth, the cult of Mary, the veneration of the saints, the relics, the pilgrimages, the Mass. But the myth of devildom and witchcraft remained, for it was the embodiment and cause of the inner torture, and now that torture at last rose to its supreme horror."⁷¹

The mental, moral and physical circumstances of life were so different from our own as to constitute a foreign civilisation. Christianity was then the matrix of life, it was omnipresent. The principle that the life of the spirit and of the afterlife was superior to the here and now, to material life on earth, was ruptured and replaced by belief in the worth of the individual and of an active life not necessarily focused entirely on God. But then, men of conviction were carried away by a thunderous new theology. The law of love was rejected for the law of hate. This is the beginning of the modern world and the end of the Middle Ages.

The end of the world was confidently expected and pessimism grew with the belief that man was becoming worse in a clear indication of the approaching end.⁷² The period was a violent, tormented, bewildered, suffering and disintegrating age, a time, as many thought, of Satan triumphant. With the collapsing assumptions of our own last decade, it is reassuring to know that the human species has lived through worse before. Historians like parallels. James Westfall Thompson compared the years following the Black Death with the period after the First World War in his 1920 book, *Aftermath*. All the same complaints were heard: economic chaos, social unrest, high prices, profiteering, depraved morals, lack of production, industrial indolence, frenetic gaiety, wild expenditure, luxury, debauchery, social and religious hysteria, greed, avarice, maladministration, decay of manners.

The mid to late 15th century and the 16th centuries were to be a bad time for humanity in the Low Countries – a time of suffering and sorrow, despair and desolation, torture and torment, and no hope of a secure future. Because people at the end of the Middle Ages existed under circumstances so different from our own, qualities of conduct that we recognise as familiar amid these alien surroundings are revealed as permanent in human nature. If we look for a lesson from history it lies here, described by the French medievalist Edouard Perroy who, writing about the Hundred Years' War whilst dodging the Gestapo wrote "Certain ways of behaviour, certain reactions against fate, throw mutual light upon each other".

Certain ways of behaviour in the Low Countries were coloured by occupation, in a land where occupation was a large part of history and where occupation was, for some, a slow process of corruption, abandoned standards and compromises. "Occupation is not a chain of events. It's an atmosphere, a state of things, it's a smell of barracks in the street, a moving stain of unfamiliar uniforms, it's marks in your pocket instead of francs, and an overriding concern – that dominates all others – about what you are going to eat. It's new words, unfamiliar music

and mobile canteens along the pavement; it's the eye's sub-conscious habit of checking along the walls for a new notice which tells you at what time the curfew begins, or what time men 18 years old and over should report to military headquarters – unless the notice is in red ink when it gives you the list of the latest civilians to be shot... ”⁷³

The pillars of the old world had certainly cracked; a new world was about to begin. With its strategic location at the frontier of Empire ensuring a high degree of political involvement across the Low Countries, bloody repression and lawlessness would lead to martial law, revolutionary activity, civil war and suffering, all for Spanish splendour.

Bruegel was to live at a time of clandestine Protestant activity and political agitation under a Catholic Church system imposed by Spain and the Papacy. By the time of his death, the ‘shadow of the sword over half the world would be the crucifix’.⁷⁴ “Do not think that I came to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.”⁷⁵

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- 1 JCLS de Sismondi *Républiques 1809-18* ch38 “ne fut point heureuse pour l’humanité”. The Swiss historian was writing about the 14th century.
 - 2 Cardinal Baronius (1538-1607) ecclesiastical historian and librarian to the Vatican, in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*, came up with the concept of the Dark Ages.
 - 3 George Gordon Coulton *Five Centuries of Religion* I, 1925 pp35 and 41
 - 4 Barbara Tuchman *A Distant Mirror* 1978 pp587-8
 - 5 Johan Huizinga *The Waning of the Middle Ages* 1924, 1950 p30
 - 6 *ibid* p10
 - 7 Jan Dequeker *The Artists and the Physician: another look at Bosch's paintings* unpublished paper 2007
 - 8 Giovanni Boccaccio *The Decameron* transl Wayne A Rebhorn 2013 pxxvii. He wrote with medieval exaggeration of 100,000 dying in Florence, far more than the population of the city at the time. Even today, estimates of deaths across Europe range from 1-200 million as a result of the plague. At its height, in 1348/9 in Paris, 800 corpses a day were being buried.
 - 9 Alberto Moravia Boccaccio in *Man as an End: A Defense of Humanism: Literary, Social, and Political Essays* transl Bernard Wall 1965 pp143-55
 - 10 Giovanni Boccaccio *The Decameron* transl Wayne A Rebhorn 2013 “Like its author, the *Decameron* straddles two ages without being fully part of either. With its heavy investment in the idealism of medieval romance and its celebration of virtues such as courtly love and magnanimity, the book reflects the culture that Boccaccio embraced during his youthful years... including romances, dream visions, and courtly debates about love. To be sure, there is another strand in the *Decameron* that is anything but courtly and romantic. While the tales sometimes put knights and ladies on display, they even more frequently celebrate the cunning, greed, lust, and energy of lower- and lower-middle-class characters who play tricks on one another and often display great verbal wit in pursuit of food, money, and, especially, sex.” pxxiv-xxv “While the *Decameron* gets produced in the middle of Boccaccio's career change from medieval vernacular poet to proto-Renaissance Latin scholar, it also takes a set of medieval genres and fills them with Renaissance themes and characters. In short, like its author and his age, Boccaccio's book is in the middle of things, and partly as a result, it turns into a masterpiece that is, perhaps confusingly at times, both medieval and Renaissance all at once.” pxxv-xxvi
 - 11 Charles Seignobos *The Rise of European Civilisation* 1939 p128 “It was the indissoluble union between the position of a vassal and the possession of a fief that constituted the feudal system.”
 - 12 Erich Fromm *The Fear of Freedom* 1942 p34 “What characterises medieval in contrast to modern society is its lack of individual freedom.”
 - 13 John Olford lecture Ravensbourne College of Art & Design 1968, and Fernand Braudel *Civilisation & Capitalism 15th-18th Century* vol 1 *The Structures of Everyday Life* 1979 pp329-330 “... there were few baths except in the large towns. The west even experienced a significant regression from the point of view of body baths and bodily cleanliness from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries... It was as commonplace to meet at the baths as at church and the bathing establishments were open to all classes, so much so that they were subject to seigneurial dues just like mills, smithies and houses selling drinks. Rich houses all possessed their ‘bathrooms’ in the basement – which meant a steam-room with bathtubs, usually made of wood and bound with hoops like barrels... After the sixteenth century, public baths became less frequent and almost disappeared, it was said because of the risk of infection and in particular the terrible disease of syphilis... In the west they often became brothels for rich customers.”
 - 14 When the Emperor Charles V abdicated at Ghent in 1555 he was considered an old man. He was 55 years old.
 - 15 Epidemics also jump from one mass of people to another, sometimes sparing one area for no obvious reason. The sweating sickness that ravaged England between 1486 and 1551 striking five times, in 1529 crossed the Channel to the Low Countries and Germany but missed France. Diseases appear, establish themselves and then retreat. Some die out. Leprosy was beaten in the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe by totally isolating patients. Smallpox, tuberculosis and syphilis (the AIDS of the age) all swept across Europe during the same period but it was the plague cycle ushered in by the Black Death, that delivered the most devastating blows with catastrophic surprise attacks, whilst even the plague somehow missed Béarn and Liège, and Poland.
 - 16 Pieter Bruegel *The Beggars* 1568 oil on panel 18.5x21.5cm Musée du Louvre, Paris
 - 17 Rich and poor slept naked in their beds. Few people ate meat. Feasts given by the ostentatious court of the Valois of the house of Burgundy with fountains of wine and huge piles of meat were not the norm. On such occasions meat: boiled, roasted and mixed with vegetables and sometimes even fish, would be served in an immense pyramid with various sauces offered separately. Unimaginable wealth lived side by side with unspeakable poverty. Diet for the masses consisted mainly of vegetables, raw or cooked. Food was monotonous: gruels, sops, bread. Food bears witness to social status, *Der Mensch ist was er isst* (Man is what he eats, the German proverb, according to Braudel, “seems to have been invented by L A Feuerbach”) civilisation and culture. The trinity of grain, flour, and bread was the major preoccupation of people for whom ‘eating one’s daily bread’ meant life.
 - 18 Paul Valéry noted that “Napoleon moved no faster than Julius Caesar”. A ‘road’ at the end of 15th century might be hardly visible, the way marked by inns, a forge, a village or a town, and little else. There would be horsemen, mules, horse-drawn covered wagons, ox-carts, beasts of burden, walkers, and before the end of Bruegel’s lifetime,

perhaps very occasionally a carriage, all going along a fairly fixed course. (Moveable front axles first appeared around 1470 on gun carriages.) There might be one road in summer and another in winter. There was always a lot of mud.

- 19 Hand G (attributed to Jan van Eyck) *The Birth of John the Baptist* c1422 within a page 28.4x20.3cm in *The Turin-Milan Hours* Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Turin. (For a reappraisal of the dating, attribution and ownership of *The Turin-Milan Hours* see Carol Herselle Krinsky *JHNA* vol 6/2 2014 in which it is argued that the manuscript was produced in Bruges c1445-52 after the death of Jan van Eyck.) Rogier van der Weyden *Annunciation* centre panel of a triptych, oil on oak c1435-1440 86.3x92.3cm Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 20 Fernand Braudel *Civilisation & Capitalism* vol 2 *The Wheels of Commerce* 1979 p85
- 21 Peter Burke 'The Triumph of Lent' chapter 8 of *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* 1978
- 22 Maurice Powicke 'The Christian Life' *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* 1926
- 23 Bamber Gascoigne *The Christians* 1977 p291
- 24 "One conclusion to be drawn from the recent accumulation of recent research on the Latin Church before the upheaval was that it was not as corrupt and ineffective as Protestants have tended to portray it, and that it generally satisfied the spiritual needs of late medieval people." MacCulloch *Reformation* 2003 pxxiii
- 25 The appointment of unfit or absentee clergy became an abuse in itself. Tenure was short because each preferment brought in another payment. There were priests who could not read or who from ignorance, stumbled through the liturgy, unfit clergy who, with the souls of the laity in their hands, spread dismay. Cardinals "rich, insolent and rapacious" in the words of Petrarch vied with each other from the magnificence of their suites at Avignon, a place where prelates feasted at "licentious banquets" and rode snow-white horses "decked in gold, fed on gold, soon to be shod in gold if the Lord does not check this slavish luxury". He found Avignon "that disgusting city" because of the worldly corruption and the physical filth of the city. The stench of sewage (both real and metaphorical) caused him to move to Vaucluse "to prolong my life". More accessible than Rome, Avignon was the most luxurious city in the West. It attracted people from all over Europe because the corruption paid for papal patronage. The money helped support artists, writers, scholars, poets and musicians. Everyone disowned the place and everyone went there. By 1327 the city had 43 branches of Italian banks and was home to every merchant, artisan, ambassador, adventurer, astrologer, thief and prostitute who could get in. See Braudel *Le Monde actuel, histoire et civilisations*, published by English in 1963 as *A History of Civilisations* pp343-4 "Avignon was undoubtedly the starting-point of humanism and, with it, the Renaissance. The town came alive with the return of Petrarch in 1337; and thanks to the presence of the Popes it was for a long time the most 'European' and the most luxurious city in the west. Even after the papacy had returned to Rome in 1376, the Anti-Popes enabled it to retain its luxury and lustre. However, it was in Florence that the Renaissance fully established, later, its 'cultural hegemony', which lasted at least until the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492, and even until the city's capture by Clement VII and the Imperial forces of Charles V, in 1530. These chronological limits, 1337 and 1530, are certainly applicable to the bulk of the phenomenon which affected not only Italy, but the West as a whole. The last great humanist, Erasmus, born in Rotterdam in 1437, died in Basle in 1536. But these two long centuries cannot be fully understood unless the historical net is cast more widely, backwards beyond 1337 (an indeterminate date in any case) and forwards beyond 1530. Backwards into the past, because the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was not the total break that used to be imagined. The Renaissance was not at the opposite pole from medieval philosophy, despite the gibes of humanists hurled at scholasticism. 'Fifty years ago,' wrote one historian, in 1942, 'the Middle Ages and the Renaissance looked as strikingly different as black and white or night and day. Then, one argument compounding another, the frontier between the two has become so confused that to distinguish between them one begins to need a compass.'
- 26 Collinson *The Reformation* 2003 quotes Anne Hudson who, in *The Premature Reformation* asked the question: what if the Reformation had started 150 years earlier?
- 27 "On the afternoon of 29 May 1453 the Sultan entered the long-desired city. Riding a white horse, he advanced down an avenue of death. The centre of Constantinople was being put to the sack by the triumphant Ottoman army. According to an observer from Venice, blood flowed through the streets like rainwater after a sudden storm; corpses floated out to sea like melons along a canal... He dismounted and bent down to pick up a handful of earth, which he poured over his turban as an act of humility before God... The cathedral of Hagia Sofia had become the mosque of Aya Sofya." Mansel *Constantinople* 1995 p1
- 28 Even before 1453 the Ottoman Turks had a series of rapid and brilliant victories. In 1448 on the plains of Kosovo 8000 of 'the flower of Hungarian nobility' died. The impact of this defeat was catastrophic. For years the Turks had nothing to fear from their enemies north of the Danube. The new masters of Byzantium and of the Arabian holy places soon restructured the whole of Islam and after 1517 the Ottoman Sultan, the Grand Turk, became the Caliph of all the faithful. Islam enjoyed a general renaissance under Turkish and Sunni influence that meant total victory for Muslim orthodoxy and traditional religion. Power reasserted itself, independent thinking was curbed and an iron regime imposed. In 1526 the Turks annihilated Christian Hungary at the Battle of Mohács.
- 29 Constantinople had a peculiar characteristic: roughly half its population was neither Turkish nor Muslim, but Jewish and Christian. Toleration was the rule whereas in western Europe expulsion or worse was the fate of Jews and heretics.
- 30 Chedomil Mijatovich *Constantine the Last Emperor of the Greeks* 1892 pp5-6, "The nation became an inert mass, without initiative and without will. Before the Emperor and the Church prelates it grovelled in the dust; behind them it rose up to spit at them and shake its fist. Tyranny and exploitation above, hatred and cowardice beneath; cruelty often, hypocrisy always and everywhere, in the upper and lower strata. Outward polish and dexterity replaced true culture; phraseology hid lack of ideas. Both political and social bodies were alike rotten; the spirit of the nation languid, devoid of all elasticity. Selfishness placed itself on the throne of public interest, and tried to cover its hideousness with the mantle of false patriotism."
- 31 The lack of union between the western and eastern churches opened the eastern European gate to the Turks. In 1073 Pope Gregory VII had declared to Ebouly de Rossi: "It is far better for a country to remain under the rule of Islam, than to be governed by Christians who refuse to acknowledge the rights of the Catholic Church". See August Friederich Gföer *Byzantinische Geschichten* vol II 1872-4 p459. The enmity between the two sides was such that 400 years later on 12 December 1452 Grand Duke Lucas Notaras declared, "It is better to see in the city the power of the Turkish turban than that of the Latin tiara". See J von Hammer *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman* vol II 1835 p426. The Ottoman Empire was at its greatest at the same time as the Habsburgs. There was a pause after the capture of Constantinople but early in the 16th century Sultan Selim I moved against Persia, conquered the caliphates of Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad and his successor, Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66) took Mecca, proclaimed himself Emperor of Islam and turned his attention west. Advancing on two fronts the Turks attacked the corsairs of North Africa at the same time as they advanced up the Danube into central Europe. By 1521 with the capture of Belgrade the Hungarian plain was open to the Ottoman advance. They first laid siege to Vienna in 1529 and raided deep into the alpine valleys for years afterwards. After a truce was agreed in 1533, Hungary, Transylvania and Moldavia became vassal states. As the Danube campaign in central Europe petered out, Ottoman expansion continued with the capitulation of the Knights Hospitallers on Rhodes in 1522, Algiers in 1529, Tripoli in 1551, Cyprus in 1571, Tunis in 1574 and Malta sieged in 1565.
- 32 In 1540 Erasmus wrote his essay *On Beginning War*. "A good prince should never go to war at all unless, after trying several other means, he cannot possibly avoid it. If we were of this mind, there would hardly be a war. If so ruinous an occurrence cannot be avoided, then the prince's main care should be to wage the war with as little calamity to his own people and as little shedding of Christian blood as may be,

and to conclude the struggle as soon as possible. Let him think over how earnestly peace is to be sought and how honourably wholesome it is; on the other hand, how disastrous and criminal an affair war is and what a host of evils it carries in its wake even if it is the most justifiable war – if there really is any war which can be called ‘just’. No other misfortune clings so steadfastly. War is sown from war.”

- 33 A certain European nationalism has led historians of science and technology to deny or minimise the amount that was ‘borrowed’ from China. *Artillery* – Gunpowder was produced there in the 9th century and firearms, possibly from the 11th and certainly from the 13th century. By the end of the 15th century, however, European artillery had become far superior to anything manufactured in Asia. *Paper and Printing* – Said to have been invented in 105AD by a eunuch named Cai Lun, a civil servant in Luoyang, paper came west from China, via the Islamic countries. (See Alexander Monro *The Paper Trail* 2014) The first paper mills were in Spain in the 12th century and Italy from the beginning of the 14th century. China had been printing from blocks of engraved wood since the 9th century and Japan was printing Buddhist texts from the 11th. Moveable characters existed in China from around 1050, made of pottery, then tin and from early in the 14th century, wood. Metal characters were perfected in Korea or China from early in the 15th century. (See also n55) *Navigation* – The Chinese did not, however, sail very far away from home. Chinese junks probably went no further than Japan or the Gulf of Tonkin.
- 34 What was once an instrument of policy has, at times, become a policy itself. The so-called ‘war on terror’ of the United States today is as unreliably reported as the battles of the Middle Ages, where numerical strengths of fighting forces and battle losses were twisted to fit the purposes of propaganda.
- 35 The military orientation of society meant that a great deal of energy and wealth were spent on armaments and fortifications. Chain-mail became reinforced with plates of steel, full suits of plate armour appeared in the 14th century and offensive weaponry struggled to keep pace.
- 36 A handgun was first heard of in 1364. It resembled a small cannon and fired a lead bullet by applying a match to a touch-hole. Towards the end of the 15th century the hand-gun gave way to the match-lock, an iron barrel mounted on a stock that fitted against the chest. It was the first true infantry firearm. It also changed the character of warfare. It democratised fighting.
- 37 “Numerous as the stars” a force of 60,000 fighting men, backed up by as many again – labourers, mining engineers and camp followers, together with a fleet of 140 ships including 18 war galleys faced the last Emperor’s force of 4773 Greeks supported by about 3000 foreigners (Venetians, Genoese, Catalans, Cretans and one Scotsman, John Grant) and around 30 ships. The Emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologus, had ordered a muster of his troops before the battle so this is one of the few military figures of the time we know to be accurate. However, as well as the disparity in numbers, it was bows and arrows against cannon. Mehmet II had artillery: 12 or 13 great bombards, 14 small batteries, each of four guns, and one monster. Urban, the Hungarian’s famous canon, had been dragged across Europe by (so the story goes) 60 oxen and 2200 men. Its barrel was 12 palma in circumference, that is 12 span of 20cm each, giving 2.4m in total, and its shot has been calculated as weighing 660kg.
- 38 Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan* 1651 part4 ch47 1968 p712 – “the Papacy, is no other, than the Ghost of the deceased *Romane Empire*, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof” (italics in the original). Hobbes attack resonated with such phrases, referring to the Universal Church as a “*Kingdome of Fairies*” comparable to “the old wives *Fables* in England”
- 39 Burckhardt (1860 and 1878) *The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy* had such an impact that the Renaissance came to be thought of as a purely Italian phenomenon: referred to by Davies *Europe* 1996 p471
- 40 By 1478 Botticelli had finished *Primavera*, the first major painting on a mythological theme for a thousand years and by 1554 Titian completed his version, at the behest of Cardinal Farnese, where Danae expectantly awaits her union with Zeus in a nakedly sexual pose. People pick up ideas without actually reading books. Did Botticelli, or those with money to commission him, read Ficino? It is not written in the easiest of Latin. Could any artist read Latin apart from Mantegna? The question therefore arises as to whether there was much of a connection between the intellectuals of the day and the artefacts that were being created. The value placed on antiquity was such that even Michelangelo faked antiques, a Cardinal purchasing his statue of Bacchus on the basis that it was very old and disposing of it when he discovered the truth. Later, the pinnacle of classicism in Renaissance art was the depiction of Adam in the Sistine Chapel, an Old Testament-Jewish-Christian moment, a classical figure and a homoerotic naked young man all in one. It was the 19th century that instated the *Primavera* as symbolic of the Renaissance to historians. Unexplained, it had come to be thought of as a classical philosophical allegory and was followed in the late 15th and early 16th centuries by a ‘Venus effect’ as the reintegration of Ovidian mythology allowed artists the licence to create pictorial images and statues of the most erotic nature for the private gratification of aristocratic patrons. The images were frequently of Venus meaning they could be explained away as being in the classical tradition and therefore in some way wholesome. The transformation of Venus into a Virgin Mary is a familiar process, Venus having the potential to move towards both a divine, yet still ecstatic love with the potential to lead towards lust and a degenerate kind of love. Both these features were present in many images of Venus simultaneously and both were in the *Primavera*, in what Botticelli saw regeneration and creation being all about.
- 41 “The fall of Granada excited general sensation throughout Christendom, where it was received as counterbalancing, in a manner, the loss of Constantinople, nearly half a century before.” William H Prescott *Ferdinand and Isabella* 1855 vol II p91
- 42 When in 1479 Ferdinand and Isabella assumed their joint rule of Aragon and Castile the union of the two kingdoms was nominal, they remained politically apart. In order to consummate their union a project was needed, something that would draw attention away from their internal interests and mutual jealousies and focus attention on a supreme goal of importance to them all. Religion was bound to play a dominant part but in itself was not enough. It needed a leader, a unifying instrument and a cause. Queen Isabella was the leader, establishment of the Inquisition the instrument and fear of another great Moslem invasion the cause. (The Inquisition was the sole common element across the two kingdoms. There was a single Inquisitor General for all Spain. Unlike elsewhere the Inquisition was entirely under royal control, its officers paid servants of the crown.) The personality of Isabella dominated Spain. She appears to have been a glamorous spider at the heart of a vast web of connections, energetically directing operations from bed, a “woman crusader who changed the course of civilisation and the aspect of the entire world”. Gerald G Walsh *Isabella of Spain* 1931 p15. Isabella was the rallying cry from a chivalrous age that the country needed, known for declaring that “she only knew four fine sights in the world: a soldier in the field, a priest at the altar, a beautiful woman in bed, a thief on the gibbet” – see René Maulde-La-Clavière *The Women of the Renaissance* 1901 p323. The Inquisition became an instrument of persecution. “It was the offspring of that fierce desire for racial purity” for in Spain “racial purity and religious orthodoxy had become mutually independent.” Furthermore “the value of the Inquisition as a Royal instrument for strengthening the monarchy and unifying the country would be difficult to exaggerate.” – R Trevor Davies *The Golden Century of Spain 1501-1621* 1937 pp11-12. The intolerance of the Inquisition had a mystical origin and a heroic goal, and was thus perfect for Spain. The former produced the Jesuits and the latter the spirit of the knight-errant parodied in Don Quixote.
- 43 Ferdinand and Isabella’s grandson would become Charles V (1500-58) ruler of the Burgundian territories (1506-55) Holy Roman Emperor (from 1519) and King of Spain (1519-56 Carlos I). By 1519 the Empire had become a mosaic of political systems, a conglomeration of diverse territories and an ethnic mixture to defy description. Charles, the son of Philip the Handsome and Joanna the Mad of Castile, was heir to four separate inheritances, one from each of his grandparents. From Ferdinand of Aragon he acquired Sicily, Naples and Sardinia as well as Aragon, adding Milan and Tunis in 1535. From Isabella he received Castile, Granada and the West Indies. On his father’s side there was Emperor Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy. Mary provided most of the Netherlands. The dukes of Burgundy had built up their territory in the 15th century largely at the expense of France and the Holy

Roman Empire. With Flanders and Brabant it was the richest land in Europe, effectively an independent state. The fiefs of Picardy and Burgundy had been lost to France in 1477 but Charles added further Netherlands to the northeast. Maximilian's Hapsburg legacy gave Charles Austria, the Tyrol, Carinthia and Alsace. He added Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and part of Hungary in 1526. Cortes had taken Mexico in 1519 and Pizarro was planning the conquest of Peru. Spain's empire thus extended to both hemispheres, meanwhile the Ottoman Empire stretched from Baghdad to the Atlas Mountains, from Aden to Buda and in William Stirling-Maxwell's stirring phrase 'Turkish cruisers levied a tax on the coasts of Christendom and the commerce of the world'. It was a military, economic and religious threat that Charles faced all his life. His cousin Mary of England married his son Philip in Winchester Cathedral on 25 July 1554. Philip thus became, if in name only, King of England. Charles represented the highpoint of the Habsburg's ability to turn marriage from a sacrament into a strategy.

- 44 The voyage of Columbus in 1492 missed its declared target by 13,000 kilometres. He failed to discover a western route to Asia and died embittered and disillusioned. The scale of his legend is staggering, a clash of myths that has cast him as both a cultural hero of the time and, in today's revisionist culture, an emblem of human exploitation and environmental degradation, responsible for all the demographic and economic ill-effects of the colonial experiments of his mismanagement. The poor weaver's son from Genoa has been portrayed as a modern, empirical intellect, steeped in medieval mysticism and millenarianism. An explorer who, in terms of routes discovered, distances covered, coasts mapped and communications established, did more than anyone before him. One who also was capable of exploitative labour practices, inventing his own myths to bolster a declining reputation and compensate for the poor material return from his voyage and one who, despite courtly patronage, liked to project an image of lonely perseverance fighting against expert ignorance, official obstruction and personal poverty – a typical story of the age with its contradictions in facts, chronic exaggeration of events and general lack of agreement about the truth.
- 45 The discovery of America has been called the greatest surprise in history. "It was almost accidental that at the climax of Portuguese pioneering enterprise, the most crucial of all the discoveries was made by a Genoese in the service of Spain." Ralph Davis *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* 1975 p1
- 46 After Columbus, in 1513, a stowaway, Vasco Núñez de Balbao, walked across the Isthmus of Panama and saw the Pacific Ocean. Then, between 1519 and 1522 Ferdinand Magellan (c1480-1521) circumnavigated the globe, proving beyond doubt that the earth was round, that the Pacific and the Atlantic were separate oceans and that the Americas lay between them. Of all the great navigators Fernão da Magalhães (Magellan) was the most daring. He set out on 20 September 1519 with five ships and 280 men, rounded South America, lost four ships and was killed in the Philippines. On 6 September 1522 the sole surviving ship, the Victoria, arrived back in Portugal with 18 men left to tell the tale that the world had been circumnavigated.
- 47 Historians have also traditionally seen it as a question of economic survival. In the course of their conquest of the eastern Mediterranean after the capture of Constantinople the Ottoman Turks had begun to set the terms of trade. They controlled the routes from Europe to the Levant and India. Just as Mehmet II had ordered his ships to be taken across land from the Bosphorus to the Golden Horn at the siege of Constantinople, and again in 1470 at the siege of Negraponte, so the fleets of ships that the Turks launched on the Red Sea in 1538, 1539 and 1588 were taken there in pieces on the backs of camels and reassembled.
- 48 Seamen always kept as close to the coast as possible. The unreliability of navigational instruments, the difficulty of taking sightings to check latitude on the rolling deck of a ship and the need to frequently tack into wind all made matters worse. Underlying everything was the unsolved problem of reproducing the curved surface of the earth on a flat map. While trips were short and close to shore the problem could be largely ignored. Following a ruled line resulted in only a small navigational error. But as the ships grew larger, more seaworthy, and the sailors more prepared to take risks, the lack of accurate maps held many would-be explorers back. Previously, the longest voyages would have been Marseilles to Barcelona, Rhodes to Alexandria (out of sight of land, four days on the open sea, if all went well), or the most daring voyage of the ancien regime, crossing the Bay of Biscay from the Iberian Peninsula to the mouth of the English Channel. When Ferdinand, the brother of Charles V tried it in 1518 he missed the Channel altogether and ended up in Ireland. Crossing the Bay of Biscay was, for centuries, an apprenticeship to the high seas. Laurent Vital *Premier Voyage de Charles Quint en Espagne* 1881 pp279-83, quoted by Braudel *Civilisation & Capitalism 15th-18th Century* vol 1 *The Structures of Everyday Life* 1979 p410
- 49 John Gillespie Magee (1922-41) the first and last line of *High Flight* written in 1941 which gained him posthumous fame: "Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth... Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."
- 50 People who travelled in canoes and "eat human flesh" apparently patrolled "all the islands of India". Against expectation, however, Columbus found "no human monstrosities" although he had been told of people with tails, an island peopled entirely by bald men and women and, of passing interest, he mentioned that "in all these islands it appears... that the women work more than the men". A four page printed letter appeared in Barcelona in April 1493. By 1500 it existed in 17 editions, nearly all of them translations. The first German translation was printed in Strasbourg in 1497. The letter contained a significant misprint in that it referred to 20 days when the crossing in fact took 33. This gave the impression to a mass audience that the islands Columbus found were much closer to Europe than was the case. Samuel Eliot Morison *Christopher Columbus, Mariner* 1955 pp205-213, and Nicholas Crane *Mercator* 2002 pp8 and 328.
- 51 All of the details from the 1493 letter of Columbus come from Morison. In 1505 news of an even more amazing voyage was circulated, again in a letter. This was from Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512), a Florentine and one time agent of the Medici in Seville. He had become the *piloto mayor*, the 'Chief Pilot' of Spain after making several transatlantic voyages and it was this fact that determined the new continent was named after him. Martin Waldseemüller produced a world map in 1507 where the coastlines of Europe, Africa and the Middle East are all recognisable. The rest was supposition and guesswork. His ideas about Asia were no better than Ptolemy's 1500 years earlier. But America is there, divided from Asia by the waters of the Pacific. At the time no one had seen the west coast but Waldseemüller's guesswork was amazingly accurate. The presence of the (unnamed) Pacific is one of the great mysteries of cartography. It was probably based simply on his friend Vespucci's belief in a new world. Waldseemüller coined the term America after Vespucci who by then had made several voyages along the continent's east coast. In his *Cosmographia* of 1507, published to accompany the map, he stated "I do not see why anyone should object to calling it after Americus the discoverer". Cited by John Noble Wilford *The Mapmakers* 1982 p84. Once called "America's birth certificate", the only known surviving copy of the map, comprising 12 sheets printed from woodcut, was bought by the US Library of Congress in 2001 for \$10 million. Vespucci's letter talked of lands far to the west that it was "proper to call a new world [the first time the phrase was used] ... a continent more densely peopled and abounding in animals than our Europe or Asia or Africa" and he went on to describe tales of cannibalism and lusting women in a "very temperate and good" world, "rich in pearls" and gold in "great plenty". It was in short, so marvellous that "if the terrestrial paradise be in any part of this earth... it is not far distant". *Mundus Novus* was a pamphlet that appeared after Vespucci's second expedition to the Americas. It appeared in 40 editions including Flemish, German, French and Czech. Translated by George T Northrup (1916) pp1-13 and referred to by Andrew Taylor *Gerard Mercator* 2004 p258 and Nicholas Crane *Mercator* 2002 p11and 382.
- 52 Each chapter began with a three-line motto and an illustration by Dürer and others.
- 53 The debate over any relationship between the poem and the painting in Paris by Bosch continues. *The Ship of Fools* oil on panel 57.9x32.6cm Musée du Louvre. 'Adrift without cares, reason, wisdom or sense' this 'mirror of follies' (prologue verse 31) might well assist in the search for one's self-knowledge, as part of a set of paintings now shown to comprise a virtually reunited triptych. Combined with *Death and the Usurer* (or *Death of a Miser*) oil on panel 92.6x30.8cm National Gallery of Art, Washington; *Allegory of Gluttony* oil on panel 36x31.5cm Yale

- University Art Gallery, New Haven; *The Pedlar* oil on panel 71x70.6cm Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; the missing element may have been a *Last Judgement*. The nature of the fragments also suggest that “the subject of the original ensemble was *The Seven Deadly Sins*” – Roger Marijnissen *Bosch: The Complete Works* 2007 p315 and p324, a view founded on combining *The Ship of Fools* with the *Allegory of Gluttony* but “further strengthened when we examine the development of the theory that *Death of a Miser* also belonged to the same (dismantled) triptych”. In the context of the Bruges *Last Judgement* it is worth noting that the ‘ship’ in Paris moves from right to left, whereas the New Haven boat is travelling from left to right. (Koreny attributes the various elements to the ‘Hay Wain Master’ Hieronymus Bosch: *Überlegungen zu Stil und Chronologie in Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4/5 2002-3 pp47-75). However, Filedt Kok suggested the possibility of a *Crucifixion* and H Th Colenbrander a *Haywain* for the missing panel Hieronymus Bosch and Diego Guevara: *The ‘third’ Haywain* 2012. Also Johannes Hartau ‘A Newly Established Triptych by Hieronymus Bosch’ *Le Dessin sous-jacent et la technologie dans la peinture. Colloque XIV, 13-15 septembre 2001 Jérôme Bosch et son entourage et autres études* Hélène Verougstraete and Roger Van Schoute (eds) 2003
- 54 By 1461 Albrecht Pfister in Bamberg had incorporated a woodblock image into a book for the first time. Music was first printed in 1473.
- 55 China had been printing from the 9th century onwards and Japan from the 11th. By the 14th century moveable wooden characters had appeared in Turkestan and at the beginning of the 15th century there were individual metal letters in both Korea and China. Around 1426 in Haarlem, Laurens Coster (Koster) c1370-1440 may have produced some individual wooden letters. In 1444 Procope Waldfoegel originally from Prague and later Avignon, certainly devised a form of moveable text, but by the end of 1454 in Mainz, it was Gutenberg who was ready to print a book, the Bible. Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg (c1398-1468) was responsible for 180 copies of the 42 line Bible (42 lines per page set in two columns) in two versions, printed on paper and vellum, that appeared from 1455. The work involved was probably enough to require a team of 20-25 craftsmen, making the type, typesetting each page, handling the forms, printing and hanging individual sheets to dry and then binding them up. His very first books were probably printed one page at a time but quite soon Gutenberg was printing ‘six pages to view’. Irregularities in the printing have given rise to many theories as to how the type was produced, if moulds and casting were involved, whether in the beginning individual letters were used at all. The typeface he used came from the manuscripts his process replaced. Whatever precisely was done, there is no doubt that this was the birth of typography and a communications revolution. Gutenberg’s business went on to cover its costs by printing thousands of indulgences for the Church to sell, ready for the purchaser’s name to be filled in. Inventor, money lender, goldsmith, thief; Johann Fust maybe the man who worked as an assistant to Coster and took the original individual pieces of moveable type from Haarlem back to his home town of Mainz and became a patron of Gutenberg. Maybe. He certainly advanced Gutenberg money in 1450 and 1452. He certainly fell out with Gutenberg and took him to court, bankrupted him and took control of the press. *The Mainz Psalter* of 1457 carries printing details but makes no mention of Gutenberg. Whatever Fust’s part in any of it (he visited Paris in the 1460s and was caught passing off printed Bibles as manuscripts), Gutenberg received the credit for inventing moveable type and is seen as one of the great men of the Millennium because of that. The mystery surrounding much of his life is only matched by the rarity of examples of his work. (The history of typography has burgeoned in the last ten years. Among the many useful references are Alan Bartram *Five hundred years of book design* 2001 and *Typeforms, a history* 2007; Paul Bennet *Books and Printing: a treasury for typophiles* 1951; John D Berry *Language Culture Type* 2002; Harry Carter *A view of early Typography, up to about 1600* 1969; Charles Enschedé *Typefoundries in the Netherlands from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century* revised and annotated by Harry Carter 1978; Geoffrey Dowding *An Introduction to the History of Printing Types* 1961; Roxane Jubert *Typography and Graphic Design, From Antiquity to the Present* 2006; John A Lane *Early Type Specimens in the Plantin-Moretus Museum* 2004; John Man *Gutenberg, How One Man Remade the World with Words* 2002; Daniel Berkeley Updike *Printing Types, their History, Forms, and Use* 1937; Hendrik D L Vervliet *Sixteenth-Century Printing Types of the Low Countries* 1968; Vervliet & Harry Carter *Type Specimen Facsimiles II – Plantin & Le Bé-Moretus* 1972
- 56 “Until 1787 (when François Ambroise Didot conceived the press which enabled a folio to be printed by one turn of the screw) methods of printing were such that if Gutenberg had come back to life and walked into a printing shop during the early years of Louis XVI’s reign in France, he would immediately have felt at home in it, save for a few minor details.” Lucien Febvre & Henri-Jean Martin *L’Apparition du livre* 1971 p15
- 57 The first book to be printed in Paris and Venice both appeared in 1470, Naples in 1471, Leuven in 1473, Krakow in 1474 and by 1500 there were 236 towns in Europe with their own print shop from Spain to Scandinavia. One calculation puts the total of incunabula at 20 million copies, 27,000 titles, three quarters of them in Latin. Books were a luxury item but 45,000 titles were published in Germany in the 16th century, 25,000 in Paris, 13,000 in Lyon, 15,000 in Venice, 10,000 in England and 8,000 in the Netherlands. Printing on average 1000 copies a time, it has been estimated that 140-200,000 titles existed making 140 to 200 million books in circulation by the end of the century. All numbers from Febvre and Martin. By 1590 presses had been exported as far as Goa, Macao and Nagasaki.
- 58 Plantin’s business had “by c1567, become the most important Press in the world. Between 1568 and 1573, Plantin completed his masterpiece, the *Biblia Regia*, which was printed in five languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syrian, and Chaldean or Aramaic in eight folio volumes and was also provided with extensive commentaries and dictionaries beyond the text editions themselves. It was the largest polyglot bible produced in the 16th century and the biggest typographical undertaking by a single printer in the Low Countries. With this project, Plantin achieved the pinnacle of his career and his workshop flourished as never before, not only as a printing house, but also as a major humanist centre in the western world. With no less than 16 printing presses and 80 employees (20 typesetters, 32 printers and 3 proofreaders, in addition to domestic personnel and sales staff) the *Officina Plantiniana* was the biggest printing-publishing business and bookshop of its time.” *From a speech* by Dr Francine de Nave, 26 January 2002. De Nave is the author of *Het Museum Plantin-Moretus te Antwerpen* (1985). Plantin’s business with Spain declined after the ‘Spanish Fury’ in Antwerp in 1576, and financial difficulties led Plantin to work for those opposed to Spanish rule. In 1582, with the advance of Farnese and the impending siege of Antwerp, Plantin established another Press in Leiden and was appointed academic printer to the university. He returned to Antwerp immediately after the city surrendered on 17 August 1585 where he rebuilt the firm with his son-in-law Jan Moretus. By the time of his death, 1 July 1589, it had become the most important printing and publishing business for the Counter-Reformation in the Low Countries. Around 2,500 titles were produced over 34 years, an average of 72 editions a year, making it the first industrial printer in history.
- 59 The work of religious writers dominated the output. In 1521-2 Andreas Karlstadt (Andreas Rudolph Bodenstein von Karlstadt 1486-1541) anticipated much that was to follow in a programme of reform, denying transubstantiation, celebrating Mass in everyday dress, iconoclasm, municipal reform and, for himself, marriage to a girl of 15, produced 90 books that appeared in 213 editions. Commercial ordinances in Geneva by 1540 assumed that in a day a skilled craftsman could produce 1300 copies of a single sheet (for the average book a sheet equated to eight pages). Editions tended to be in multiples of 700 copies, half a day’s work. For Bible printing numbers, see Cottret *Calvin: a biography* 2000 pp93-4
- 60 New Learning came to be a Catholic term of abuse for evangelical theology in the 16th century but, in an oversimplification, had been used previously to describe humanism.
- 61 There was a lot of entrepreneurial spirit about at the time, profiting from catastrophe. From the wreckage of the Eastern Empire came the drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the reappearance of an unknown or forgotten philosopher, Plato, writers on government and oratory like Cicero. In anticipation of the end, several years before Constantinople fell, Giovanni Aurispa, a Sicilian dealer in manuscripts brought west 238 Greek manuscripts.
- 62 The image of Moses wearing horns as he comes down from Mt Sinai with the tablets is based on a mistranslation.

- 63 Adrian Hastings *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* 1997. Charles V allowed publication in Antwerp of French and Flemish Bibles, provided they were purged of specifically Lutheran elements.
- 64 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 10:17
- 65 In the preface to his New Testament, Erasmus expresses the Renaissance belief in the creative power of language when he states: "These writings bring you... the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ himself, and thus they render him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon him with your very eyes". Twenty years after his death, the Church placed all the works of Erasmus on the Index of Prohibited Books.
- 66 The ultimate Christian humanist enterprise, publication of the Bible in its original languages, as undertaken at Alcalá by the spearhead of the Iberian Catholic Reformation, Cardinal Ximenes, primate of Spain from 1495-1517, who zealously adopted the principles of Erasmus as a guide to reform. See Chadwick *The Reformation* 1964 p252 "He enforced poverty among the monks and friars; dissolved religious houses which failed to confirm to his standards or stripped them of their endowments and devoted the revenues to hospitals or to impoverished monasteries; compelled incumbents to reside upon their benefices, to expound the Scriptures, and to educate children; and created the university of Alcalá, designed to train scholastic theologians and the clergy, where the study of Hebrew and Greek languages was encouraged." Published as a part work, the last of six volumes appeared in 1517, only to await Papal approval which delayed sales until 1522, well after Erasmus' Greek New Testament of 1516 had cornered the market. The Complutensian Polyglot displayed the text of the Vulgate Bible with parallel texts in Hebrew, Greek and new Latin interpretations where necessary. This major scholarly achievement of Spanish Catholicism was testimony to the conviction that humanism could help rather than harm the Church's mission. However, after 1530 Spanish Erasmians encountered the disapproval of the Inquisition.
- 67 In Luther's Saxony there were very few schools and none at all in the countryside. He was horrified to discover just how illiterate and ignorant of even the most basic religion most people were. But people read aloud and any pamphlet gathered a large audience. They heard "The Word" via these printed sheets. German *Flugschrift* were usually 32 pages and would sell for a day's wages. Before pamphlets were produced, woodcut images to commemorate a religious experience sold in their thousands.
- 68 Evangelism needed preachers; Calvin only allowed his sermons to be published with great reluctance. In England, Hugh Latimer's sermons were taken down in shorthand, typeset in Black Letter, published as books and read.
- 69 Shakespeare (1564-1616) *Henry IV Part 1* (1597-98) Act III scene 2, Falstaff to Shallow
- 70 JFC Fuller 'The disruption of Christendom' *The Decisive Battles of the Western World 480BC-1757 and their influence upon history* vol 1, 1954, abridged, revised and ed John Terraine 1970 p461
- 71 Oswald Spengler *The Decline of the West* vol II (English ed 1928) p299
- 72 The population of Europe was at its lowest point around the time of the birth of Hieronymus Bosch. It would not begin to rise until the time of his death and the birth of Pieter Bruegel the Elder.
- 73 Georges Simenon described the experience of living through occupation in Liège during the First World War in 1938 in *Les trois rimes de mes amis* demonstrating how it scarred a generation of young people.
- 74 Antony Beevor *The Battle for Spain* 2006 p4
- 75 Gospel According to St Matthew 10:34

3

Religion – a paradise lost

On the religious frontline

The Geography of Death

Entr'acte Tracey Emin

Apocalypse Now: *The Last Judgement*

“Spe salvi facti sumus”

A question of dates

Originals, copies, and influences

Monsters for children reach a frontier

The World before and after The Flood

“Ist dies etwa der Tod?”

Visions, mystical experience, spiritual emergency, and ekphrasis

Entr'acte Anselm Kiefer

Faith, fear and instability

On the religious frontline

"Course there's hell, flames, damnation, torments" Graham Greene¹

"The history book on the shelf / Is always repeating itself" Abba²

BIBLICAL DISASTER suits fundamentalists. Today, an economic system based on the infinite expansion of finite resources is increasingly questioned. Yet the possibility of war based on environmental change similar to the end of the 13th century when Christians turned on Jews and Muslims on Christians as starvation hit, may yet deliver an Anti-Christ in the 21st. Appreciating a little of this helps us better understand the world of Bosch and Bruegel. Religion has become a part of this century's politics as much as it was the 15th and 16th centuries. Has much changed? Even today, there are places in the world where people identify themselves by their religion first and their nationality second. It seems like a trip back in time to visit such places yet today religious front-lines criss-cross the globe. Before 11 September 2001 a secular end to history was predicted by one and all and most Christians followed their religion vicariously; they let someone else do their churchgoing for them. Before that September day faith was seen as irrelevant to foreign policy. But now religion is inescapable as part of politics. Realpolitik cannot easily deal with the irrational yet in this century elitist secularism seems to have overreached itself.

The heady combination of science, learning and democracy that made up progressive thought since the Enlightenment was expected to kill off religion. In France the *revolutionnaires* detested God as a crucial part of the *ancien régime* declaring that in future politics would be protected from such evil. "Modernising post-colonial leaders all saw secularism and progress as indivisible."³ Freedom of thought as an axiom of liberal thought had not expected God to survive. Christian Democratic parties everywhere tend to treat the first part of their name as silent.⁴

If you believe that God gave you the West Bank or abortion is murder, compromise is difficult.⁵ Politicians and commentators casually throw around phrases such as the Evil Empire and Islamofascism. No government today officially approves of killing people solely because of their religion and religious leaders do not sanctify such killings, bless armadas or preach crusades. Nor do national leaders try to solve international relations via marriage. Armies do not march behind the banners of religion. Modern wars of religion are less violent and all consuming than 500 years ago. The religious arguments may have moved on to culture, science and economics, a battleground where the fight is over abortion, gay marriage, stem cells and euthanasia, climate change and genetic manipulation. For whatever reason, sin and Satan are once again omnipresent for many people.⁶ In 2011 a poll by Associated Press found eight in ten Americans believed in angels. Those claiming to have witnessed divine healing or received a direct revelation from God are growing fast. Pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, Lourdes and Jasna Góra are once again booming. (Pennies from Heaven are not restricted to Christianity alone. Dubai has announced plans to build a Holy Koran theme park. Moses led his people through Sinai "with God as their tour guide" according to Rabbi Peter Tarlow.) Those who choose to believe that the world was created exactly 6,017 years ago are on the increase as intelligent design and creationism are taught as science. The battle over evolution unites belief in God with scepticism about science. Whether man is a descendant of the angels or the apes is now an international debate.

Differences of opinion over martyrs and traitors, the primacy of the word, battles against the worship of relics, secularism and radicalism, the role of religion in education and the acceptability of religious symbols in everyday life, may all be of concern to the heirs of the Ottoman Empire but they should sound very familiar to Christians.

For those who think Islam is simply blood curdling – try Leviticus.

The God of Bosch was a judge with a rule book that focused on sin. The idea of ranking sins in terms of escalating severity and hence the paralysing horror of various levels of punishment was disputed by Thomas Aquinas, nevertheless the consequences of sin were made so appalling to frighten the faithful into obedience with the ultimate punishments of languishing in purgatory and being sent to Hell. By the time of Bosch medieval churches were no longer focused on the Virgin Mary, the crucifix or Heaven – but on the harrowing of Hell.

God was the supreme bureaucrat. His angels recorded, and presumably filed in their bad books, every major sin and minor misdemeanour. God was the spy of spies, ubiquitous, unsleeping, all-seeing. There was no getting away from Him, tabs were kept on everyone. Eternity lasts a very long time, thus, by the time of Bosch, the Church had produced an incentive plan to persuade the faithful that it would be time better spent in Heaven than Hell. The terms on which this plan operated became open to renegotiation through penance for one's sins – but the price was high.⁷

In the next two chapters I am going to consider the following.

Religion as art – The Geography of Death

For some artists, human life is enough. Others only grow to full stature if they voyage beyond life into the heavens, hells and mythical shadow-lands. Bosch belongs among these. However, Bosch was a restless figure on a private mission. In the midst of the cult of death he was bursting with life. His missionary zeal guided the creation of paintings that seethe with spiritual turmoil. He attempted to paint like God. He painted with such certainty it conquered rationality. His Hell is not merely an aggregation of Medieval symbols it is truly a vision. People would not have viewed his work and asked “Does it make sense?” It had gone beyond that. Listening to Beethoven you do not ask “Does it make sense?” because you know it has got beyond that. So with Bosch. In his lifetime, mankind walked among the supernatural, everyone believed in other worlds. He painted with such conviction that the work conquers rationality. Death was the subject: enormous, overwhelming, all-consuming, unavoidable. The struggle with death was what intrigued him and the struggle was ferocious. Evil was the enemy.

Apocalypse Now: *The Last Judgement*

The Last Judgement in Vienna: what are we looking at? Is it a vision of hope or despair? Is it a Last Judgement? To what extent is the entire oeuvre of Bosch eschatological? The question of originals, copies, and influences is complex: what might the *Last Judgements* by Bouts, Memling, and Cranach, Van der Weyden or even Van Cleve, tell us about the painting by Bosch? What could we learn from a *Last Judgement* in Munich, and one in Bruges, the rewards and pains of the Particular Judgement illustrated in *Visions of the Hereafter* in Venice (that may, it is frequently argued, have enclosed a *Last Judgement*), *The World before and after the Flood* in Rotterdam? How should we address the question of dating the work of Bosch: “Only connect” or Occam? Will we ever “Live in fragments no longer” or will adopting ‘Occam’s razor’ really tell us anything?⁸

Encyclopaedia of Sin: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

Almost everybody refines; almost nobody redefines. But Bosch did. He redefined art. In his day, ‘the shock of the new’ on first viewing must have been acute. Punching through the incomprehension of our own age to understand his weird imagery is not an easy task. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is inventive and original even by the extraordinary standards of Bosch. It is confusingly modern. It haunts the history of art just as the Garden of Eden haunts the

peoples of the Book as the site of creation, bounty, betrayal and loss, the spur for repentance and redemption, as a preview of Heaven and a model for an earthly Utopia. The painting is the subject of an infinite quest for its meaning just as the Garden became an infinite quest for the descendants of Adam to find, describe, picture and recreate. An anomaly in the history of art, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is not just a window onto a lost world, the view from a vanished age, it is an allegory of the spiritual journey undertaken by Bosch through dystopia, its focus is evil and sin – “for it was after sin that lust began”⁹ – and it is an ultimate challenge to write about. It is not a story of faith and triumph, as redemption and forgiveness are nowhere to be seen. Outside, God sits on high blessing his creation, and sees the general corruption of man before his redemption by Christ: “The Lord hath looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God”.¹⁰ Opening the shutters, like God opening up His creation to take a look at how it is all going, He would have been disappointed. We are morally at sea. The audience would expect a *Last Judgement*. What they saw must have made them wonder if He might have been left behind out there. That judgement is now inside ourselves: “The kingdom of God is within you”.¹¹ Startling, complex, unprecedented, much imitated, we have to embrace the mystery of this theological rebus in an attempt to understand the way in which a picture of seemingly unrestrained appetites might reflect the age of Bosch.

A Man Alone: *The Tribulations of St Antony*

A world-view of world history characterizes this elaborate narrative packed with incident. The view has become panoramic, the cast of characters enlarged, the crowd scenes complex, the compositional technique inverted. The world has been overtaken by sin and evil. There is little reference to life beyond this one being swallowed up by sin. The main events are subsidiary to the foreground action. Outside, the thieves are centre stage and Christ further back, Peter’s cutting off the ear of Malchus is set in front of Christ’s arrest, and inside, it is difficult enough to find the saint in this, let alone his Saviour – St Antony clearly subordinate to the evil swirling around him, Christ is all but invisible. Two arched windows into the world of biblical world history lead us into the torments of Antony.

The Lisbon triptych is a synthesis of medieval belief combined with the temptations faced by St Antony. Seen by some as a chemical citadel, by some as a summation of the hysteria surrounding witchcraft, and others as supporting late-medieval psychological theories, even a “last attempt to restore a faltering humanism and a troubling preface to the Renaissance”¹² it is highly innovative in depicting both holy figures in a heavenly setting and a world submersed in sin. The steadfastness of Antony is set before us as an example of the resolve that we should muster in the face of sin. For the viewer their involvement is compelled by the artist’s challenge to find Christ in an evil landscape that overwhelms the potential for salvation in the world to come that Bosch does not feature. The relationship of Christ’s Passion on the exterior to the life of St Antony on the interior reinforces the medieval concept of *imitatio Christi*: as Christ turns to Veronica so Antony turns away from a temptress, as Christ (unusually) falls on his *Arrest* so Antony ‘falls’ before the altar.

Foreign affairs – a Roman Holiday

Did the artist really never leave his home town? Did he visit Italy? If he travelled where did he go, when might he have travelled, why and with whom? What could have compelled him to go anywhere? What happened in the years 1474-81 and 1500-1503? What evidence is there one way and the other? And what might we infer from the first appearance of the artist’s signature? Could the skating red-cloaked funnel-hatted bird-like crippled messenger in the St Antony triptych have something to tell us, the viewer, as well as the devils under the bridge?

The world according to Bosch – encounters with God

A moralist haunted by the devil, obsessed by the deadly sins and by their eternal punishment, Bosch painted the order of his day: late medieval demons let loose on the viewer, anthropomorphic creatures mixed with inanimate objects, monsters metamorphosed into recognisable creatures, living things transformed into fiendishly fabulous phantasmal fears, all set in an apocalyptic abyss of parasomnia that in its power to terrify had great appeal in the 16th century – demonic art that in some cases was “also interpreted as the product of actual dreams”.¹³ Vast war-zones that we associate with the Apocalypse are nevertheless, in Bosch, inaccurate in terms of scripture: we do not look into Hell “but at the last gasps of God’s Creation, ie at the world turning, or turned, into Hell” and it was meant to transfix and horrify, to alarm and distress the beholders.¹⁴ But these are not nightmares, and they are not derived from popular dream books of the day, they picture the genuine fears of the age, of which the greatest torture of all was being denied the sight of Christ in person.

There is no fear in love.¹⁵ Thus whilst it was only “with fear and trembling” mankind could work out its salvation, it was only the genuine love of God that could overcome the servile fear of punishment of sin, fear of offending Him, and His judgement.¹⁶ Fear meant pain and torment and being condemned to the eternal night of the damned. Decorative his degenerate devils may sometimes be, emanating from the bowels of the earth and, quite literally, from mankind, but that is only symbolic of a world turned upside down, the original order of Creation reversed, the underworld in command over the upper, the body’s basic instincts ruling the spirit, the bowels controlling the brain as a visual expression of their demonic preoccupations.

As Gombrich observed, “Bosch showed that the traditions and achievements of painting which had been developed to represent reality most convincingly could be turned round, as it were, to give us an equally plausible picture of things no human eye had seen... For the first and perhaps for the only time, an artist had succeeded in giving concrete and tangible shape to the fears that had haunted the minds of man in the Middle Ages.”¹⁷



51, 52, 53 Simon Marmion *Visio Thugdali* c1474 – *Torment of Murderers* (MS30 f13v) *Torment of thieves: Tondal leads a cow across a nail-studded bridge* (MS30 f20) *Demons dragging Tondal into the infernal cistern* (MS30 f29) Los Angeles, Getty Museum

The Geography of Death

"He who would teach men to die would teach them to live" Michel de Montaigne

"Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room" Canon Henry

Scott-Holland

"Against other things it is possible to obtain security. But when it comes to death we human beings all live in an unwallled city" Epicurus

Asked if he believed in God, Matisse answered, "I do when I'm working".¹⁸

DEATH WAS A WAY OF LIFE. No one in the Middle Ages doubted that the vast majority of people would be eternally damned. The damned would far, far outnumber the saved. From Augustine to Aquinas the principle was maintained, *Salvandorum paucitas, damnandorum multitudo*, few saved many damned. But no matter how few were chosen, the Church offered hope to all. Salvation was closed off to non-believers in Christ, but not to sinners. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. No salvation outside the Church was the rule. Art, drama, hopes and fears all came together in church. The medieval Western Church that was to tear itself apart in the 16th century was built on the centrepiece of devotional life, the Mass, and the central controlling authority of the Pope. Without them there would have been nothing for the reformers to challenge.¹⁹

The concentration on death which, coupled with belief in Purgatory and the need to help those who resided there, meant intercessions for the dead as part of the Mass.²⁰ From the 9th century churches had been designed or adapted to increase the number of altars in order that as many Masses as possible could be said for the sake of the dead. The more Masses the better. By the 12th century a more developed geography of the afterlife had been developed. The New Testament's stark choice between Heaven and Hell was a little too stark. Surely there could be some way in which those whose life had fallen short of perfection could work their way up to Heaven? It was unfair that in a brief, imperfect life on earth, with all the privations, hardships and difficulties that that entailed in the world of the Middle Ages, there should not be a way of avoiding Hell and damnation. Creative thinkers therefore speculated about a middle state where those who hoped and believed that God loved them might have a chance to perfect the hard slog towards holiness. This became Purgatory with a further refinement for those Prophets and Patriarchs who died before the birth of Christ, and unbaptised infants, Limbo.²¹ Limbo was God's ante-room.

Purgatory had a time limit. Unlike Heaven and Hell, come the Last Judgement it would be cleaned out. However, individual time limits were placed on people according to the sins committed. A system was then put in place whereby a Mass could prompt the mercy of God for those expecting to spend time in Purgatory and the level of mercy granted could be calibrated precisely to the number of Masses. Thus the Mass became the centre of an industry of intercession, but it was only one instrument. The system of indulgences developed the idea of a 'treasury of merit' made up from the virtues of Christ and the Saints, starting with the Virgin Mary, all of whom reside in Heaven. As the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Pope was in a position to dispense this treasury to the faithful, in order to shorten the time they could expect to spend in Purgatory. This grant was an indulgence.²²

Luther was only one among many who expressed unease about the original worthy aims of the system of indulgences. Netherlandish leaders of the *Devotio Moderna* had condemned the abuses of indulgences long before.²³ The impulse towards a more personal religion began as a reform movement within the Catholic Church, anticipating by many years the final explosion of the Reformation, that began as a modified adaptation of mystical devotion, and was part

of a wider movement in the Low Countries that emphasised a life of quiet spirituality and a close personal relationship with God. It was a form of practical religion open to laymen as well as well as priests. Until recently, the most evocative traces of it were the peaceful courtyards of the *béguinages* in the Netherlands and Belgium where the laywomen or *béguines* used to live together practising a life of prayer and charity.²⁴ They caught the medieval longing for apostolic simplicity, lay involvement and mysticism, were highly disturbing to medieval men, leading in some cases to accusations of heresy and being burned alive.

It was reflected in painting in northern Europe. In Italian art, donors kneel at a respectful distance from the holy family, remaining well outside the painted scene they have paid for; the Virgin Mary may acquire the friendly face of the painter's mistress but she remains in a formal architectural framework, well removed from the everyday world of Renaissance Italy. In the north meanwhile, Jan van Eyck painted Canon van der Paele being personally introduced to the Virgin and Child by a well-disposed saint and even showed Chancellor Rolin alone in a room with them.²⁵

In the same way the Virgin Mary herself became more natural, even bourgeois, moving into a series of delightful living rooms with spotless, functional furniture and the bustle of a Flemish street visible through the window. A queen of heaven and a woman of infinite variety, at her most enchanting she can be seen in Joos van Cleve's *Madonna of the Cherries*. There is no place here for anything so un-bourgeois as a halo – although a hint of it can be seen in her circular bonnet. Then there is the naturalistic sleight-of-hand of the fire screen behind Robert Campin's *Virgin* in the National Gallery – a hideous lady, but then if Virgins are to be convincingly human they cannot all be beautiful.

Similarly, Hans Memling's *Virgin and Child with Maarten van Nieuwenhove* shows the Queen of Heaven visiting her patron at home, the separation of the panels the only indication that they are not quite within touching distance of one another.²⁶ These *sacra conversazione* set in spatially coherent rooms served to enhance the alliance between the secular realm and the sacred objects of devotion. Demonstrations of easy familiarity with the Holy Family, even in one's own home, should not disguise the fact that these were still intended as devotional images. As a mother Mary was much more accessible than God, even a God made man. She was not only human but a spiritual route to her son. In her Queen of Heaven pose as throne and altar presenting Christ in the form of a liturgical act, Mary is *sedes sapientiae*, Our Lady of the Chair, the seat of wisdom but without the magnificence in intimate domestic surroundings comparable to the Prado Adoration of the Magi by Bosch.²⁷

Death was becoming more complicated

The end of the world was coming. The idea of the afterlife was of increasing concern towards the end of the Middle Ages. For some the fall of Constantinople had been the beginning of the end, for others the Black Death, Schism in the Church, the approaching date of 1500, wherever people looked they were in need of salvation, they believed that most of them were set for eternal damnation or, at the very least, Purgatory – and that the end was getting very close. They had a range of ideas to choose from as to what Heaven and Hell would actually be like. Despite Heaven being so interesting, western culture has always been spellbound by Hell.

At the core of the mythology of most religions is the notion that the souls or spirits of mankind continue to live after their bodies have died. The Egyptians defined the difference between heaven and hell 6000 years ago.²⁸ For the Greeks it was a place to visit and return from, often a wiser person for having made the trip.²⁹ The Zoroastrians introduced the concept of worldly behaviour determining the afterlife.³⁰ The Christian vision of the four last things: death, judgement, Heaven and Hell was given unified form by artists.

The direct reward and brute vengeance of God was stratified in the category-splitting



54 Jan van Eyck *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*
Bruges, Groeningemuseum



55 Van Eyck *The Virgin and Child with Chancellor Rolin* Paris, Musée du Louvre



56 Hans Memling *Virgin and Child with Maarten van Nieuwenhove*
Bruges, Hospitaalmuseum Sint-Janshospitaal



57 Jheronimus Bosch
Adoration of the Magi (detail)
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



58 Robert Campin (or follower)
The Virgin and Child before a Firescreen
London, National Gallery



59 Joos van Cleve and collaborator
Virgin and Child
New York, Metropolitan Museum

theological arguments of the medieval Church into a highly elaborate system of classification. The symbolic and allegorical ramifications were as important as the structure. A superstructure of belief, legend and symbolism was imposed on top of the basic doctrine. There was a rigid hierarchy of spirits in Heaven: Cherubim, the angels of knowledge, and Seraphim, the angels of love, were at the top, God's messengers, the angels were at the bottom. Thousands, millions, more than twelve legions, the numbers of angels were countless. The Church never defined this celestial Ministry of Love as dogma, an article of faith, although Benedict XII had formally defined the existence of Heaven in 1336. It was a state not a place.

To the early Christians it was not entirely clear where Heaven was. The distinction between Heaven and paradise was also unclear. Paradise was taken to be the Garden of Eden; it was all about landscape (as it was for the Egyptians), a formal garden, nature subdued, a place of safety, beauty and abundance, a place of enjoyment, beautiful forms, free of sin and guilt. But it was only one part of Heaven. Heaven was a place of light and serenity, a place where the concerns of bodily life fall away, where all minds are turned towards God, in praise and thanksgiving, and where there was little concern for punishment, ideas that developed strongly throughout the Middle Ages.

One of the earliest Christian notions of Heaven was recorded by Tertullian in *De Spectaculis* around 200AD where going to Heaven is compared to going to the spectacles in the amphitheatre, where he advises they will be able to watch the torments of the damned, jumping about in the flames, pagan philosophers and magistrates who condemn Christians will be roasting in the fiery pit.³¹ It will be one of the eternal joys of Heaven to watch them. It will be better than anything to be seen on earth and it will last forever. In Tertullian this was a triumph. You had triumphed over evil to have reached Heaven and you could crow over the damned as a reward. There was also an added psychological torture for souls in Hell being able to see those in Heaven.

The Hebrews had a very unclear idea of Hell, for them it was as shadowy a place as it was for the Greeks and Romans. Christianity erected an immense structure of fear out of the New Testament.³² Hell was chaos, active, malevolent, aggressive, it was on the other side of a dualistic universe. And in the 15th and 16th centuries it was an absolute, concrete, real place. After death there was nothing but a corridor of eternity, hence eternal punishment, excruciating pain to an infinite degree. It was vindictive and meaningless, because being unimaginable, infinite and eternal are both very powerful deterrents. "Torture was not pursued with a bureaucratic zeal equal to the medieval Church until the Third Reich."³³

From around the 4th century there was an explosive growth of belief in Hell within the Western Church, the result of the extraordinary influence of apocalyptic literature and later, in particular Dante, Christianity took off as a major proselytising religion, out to save as many souls as possible, which it did by terrifying everyone with the idea of Hell, before telling them that there was a way out.³⁴ In the Eastern Church the focus was always on salvation and the redeeming figure of Christ. It had no depiction of the terrors of Hell until the fall of Constantinople, seen as an augury of the beginning of the end of time.

By the 11th and 12th century Christ was shown standing triumphantly on the gates of Hell that have fallen down. He looked down at those who had been waiting for this moment for thousands of years. From that moment they are brought into the scheme of salvation that the Christian Church constructed. The past became part of the new order of salvation. This mainly appears in manuscripts and images produced for private devotion. The main purpose of depicting Hell was in order to get you to repent. Thus, at the end of the general ward in the Hôtel Dieu in Beaune, Van der Weyden's image of the *Last Judgement* was located, a picture where every type of person is being judged. As you lay there dying that was what you looked at. It was painting with a purpose. Repent while you still have time. St Augustine had said of Hell

that it was a place of torment beyond imagining.³⁵ Bosch pushed the limits further than anyone as he became fascinated by the idea of unimaginable levels of perpetual suffering. In 1215 the Lateran Council had decided on perpetual punishment. Other than repentance, the only way out was through indulgence. This required a papacy that could deliver a way out for sinners. It then follows that the more Hell is depicted, the more real and certain eternal damnation becomes, the more dependant everyone became on the institution of the Church.

Hence the Protestants would say that the Church focused so much on Hell as it was a source of revenue. This was particularly the case towards the end of the 15th century when Bosch was painting his absurd, elaborate, and extravagant, images of Hell, just as worshippers began to seriously complain about the sale of indulgences.

But where was Hell? Unlike Heaven which defied geographical location, infernal cartography matched advances in contemporary mapmaking with the 1481 edition of Dante that incorporated a commentary by Cristoforo Landino including calculations regarding the dimensions of the Inferno that were subsequently used for many generations of charts compiled in all scientific seriousness.³⁶ Biblical imprecision as to the whereabouts of Heaven did not deter those seeking Hell. The Inferno comprised nine concentric circles that corresponded to the categories of deadly sin. It was shaped like a funnel and located beneath the earth's surface, extending from just below Jerusalem to the centre of the world, where the Devil was located in a frozen lake. Dante never identified the entrance to the Inferno, but the Romans considered Cumae near Lake Avernus, a Neapolitan volcanic crater, marked the entrance to the underworld; Virgil had Aeneas descend through the Cave of Sibyl, and following Boccaccio identifying Avernus as the portal to Hell in the 14th century, it consistently appeared on maps.³⁷ By 1515, a Venetian map of the Inferno exploited "a novel, quasi-scientific commitment to empirical realism, developed in the context of contemporary cartography, to chart infernal terrain... reveal how a new sense of reality, and aesthetic realism, conquered even the netherworld".³⁸

This infernal terrain was not solely a product of literary imagination. Detailed ekphrastic representations of the netherworld were germinated in the especially fertile ground of the illuminated book where Hell maintained its appeal for the medieval imagination. An almost insatiable artistic appetite fed on theological discourse as much as it gorged on folklore.

The 12th century *Visio Tnugdali* was not only the most famous and influential vision of Heaven and Hell before Dante, but had conveyed through an aura of revealed truth sufficient information to provoke a century-long debate about the shape, size and location of Hell. Written in Latin it was quickly translated into a number of European vernacular languages as the phantasmal unworldly voyage of the wayward knight Tondal, touring the rewards awaiting the blessed and sinners in the next world, swept the readership of this one for a quarter of the millennium. (Bosch could certainly have known Tondal. It was published in Dutch in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1484, and even earlier in Antwerp.) Simon Marmion produced the only known illuminated edition of Tondal for Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, in 1474. Out of 20 images, four are reserved for Heaven whereas the torments of Hell are shown in ten. The graphic combination of text and images spares the reader nothing in its relish of the hideous, transforming Hell into a world of mesmerising allure designed to provoke dread in the pious.

Over the years the differences between poetic licence and theological reality became even less distinct in the course of argument. Despite the mathematical inconsistencies in Dante nothing seems to have dulled the enthusiasm of Renaissance scholars to extract and interpret precise measurements from his text in order to chart the terra incognita. The bizarre desire to map a fictitious landscape with mathematical precision to a modern scientific mentality was defended by no less a figure than Galileo Galilei as late as 1588.³⁹

Once we reach Hell, the disconcerting, alarming, frightening images come at us in such

profusion that among the hundreds of figures there was something to disturb everyone and make them feel very uncomfortable. Whether it is a half human, half reptilian monster, gnawing away the whole time or a man struggling perpetually through the strings of a harp, today we may consider there is a game going on as we are forced to admire the mind that could dream these creatures up, a mind that is also seeking personal admiration for its creativity, but in the era when they were painted it was not a game at all. Hell offers more variety than Heaven. There are many more ways of being wicked and being damned. The principal behind Dante's Hell is that the punishment fits the crime.⁴⁰ Dante clearly enjoys the sufferings of others. As Dante would have known Tondal, so Bosch could have known Dante, probably through the Dominican's library in 's-Hertogenbosch.⁴¹ Bosch's surreal creatures inflict all the punishments that Dante described. There was a whole system of art surrounding this. TS Eliot thought that Dante emphasised the physical immediacy of allegory: "Dante's is a visual imagination... in the sense that he lived in an age in which men still saw visions".⁴²

The monsters that lurk in the depths of Dante's imagination were not only recognisable to artists like Bosch; they are recognisable to us today.⁴³ Dante provided a reliable eyewitness account of the other world as well as a vivid legend, a sort of travelling chat show of the afterlife with the limelight thrown on a host of politicians and celebrities, with tales of Papal skulduggery and cryptic hints for its overthrow treated like a 15th century thinking person's Da Vinci Code.⁴⁴

In the 1481 edition of Dante's work, the illustrations are by Botticelli. Those for Hell are far more interesting than the ones for Heaven simply because his imagination could run riot with ghastly detail and people suffering.⁴⁵ The earliest accounts of salvation in Christianity did not contain elements of terror or fear, it was simply the case that if you were not with God, you were without God, beyond the place of love and compassion, but you were not tortured. The 'horror movies' of the Middle Ages were the paintings where real punishment was separation from God and perpetual damnation in a Hell that would be both physical and spiritual. The Church believed that being a member of the Church would save you from this. Membership was the ticket to salvation. Artists were their recruiting agents.

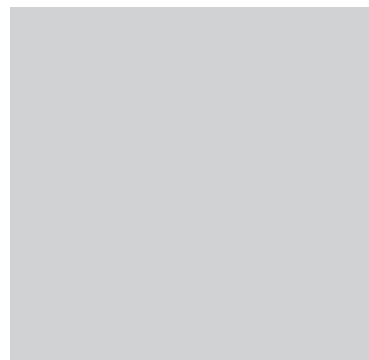
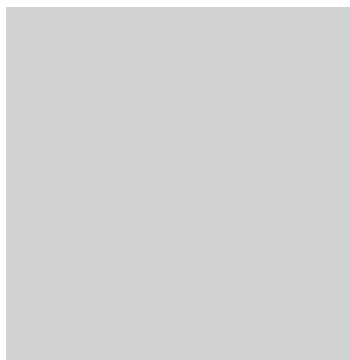
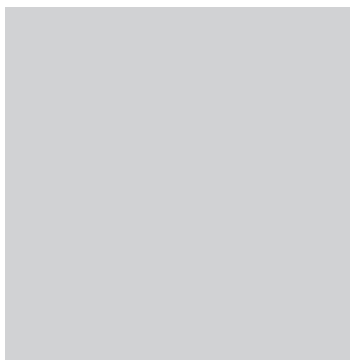
Death became a more complicated issue than it had been in the earlier morality plays.⁴⁶

If God is omnipotent, where does evil come from? The dilemma is in the New Testament where the Devil features in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with the temptations of Christ: this is a question that Judaism⁴⁷ and Christianity never really answer.⁴⁸ Satan's command performance is in Matthew where after Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit leads him into the wilderness and God deliberately sets up a confrontation.⁴⁹ Satan is an instrument of God; he is allowed to do what he does because God gives him permission. The Devil is God's enforcer of the Law. As the New Testament took shape the idea developed of Satan as a total adversary. It was not there before.

Ideas about the Devil in the New Testament are few and vague. Today there is a great deal less about the Devil in the Bible than previously. Some books have been cut, it has been cleaned up. The books of the Apocrypha are important for a medieval Christian appreciation of the Devil, when they influenced tradition and legend. Of dubious value historically, the Apocryphal gospels give some idea of religious conditions in the second and third centuries when many of them were written: a lawless, disorderly, sinful time when Satan was believed to be roaming the earth's surface, much of it is apocalyptic literature, Jesus was about to reappear on the earth and the end was nigh. In the Apocrypha, however, the Odes of Solomon and the Gospel of Nicodemus develop a whole narrative about Jesus visiting Hell after his crucifixion, freeing the just, leaving Satan as Hell's prisoner, and generally developing the relationship between death, Hell and the Devil. *Descendit ad inferos* from the Apostles' Creed is variously translated as underworld, netherworld, place of the dead. From around 1000AD, the phrase



60, 61 Rogier van der Weyden *The Last Judgement* Beaune, Hôtel Dieu



62, 63, 64 *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* c1440 Utrecht. *Souls released from Purgatory* (Ms945 f107) *Souls tormented in Purgatory* (Ms945 f97r) *An angel descending into Purgatory to console three souls with an offering* (Ms945 f105) The Morgan Library & Museum

the 'harrowing of Hell' appeared and stories about what happened to Christ after he died on the Cross developed further, particularly in drama such as the York and Wakefield cycles of miracle plays where Jesus breaks down the barriers and rescues the just.⁵⁰ They were perfect for an audience that was seeking the sensational and the marvellous, full of romantic fables with fantastic and striking details, their fabrications were eagerly read and largely accepted as true by people predisposed to believe what so luxuriously fed their pious curiosity. Their true origin was forgotten even by the learned.

After 1347, the Black Death shook Christianity to its roots. It broke every understanding of what was normal. Because the Church existed, the people would be saved. Yet with the Black Death everyone was facing death, the just slaughtered as much as the unjust, and total bewilderment set in. The realisation that the Church might not be able to save the world made people think that not only was the Church destroying itself by having two popes at the same time, but that a force for evil really was at large on the earth. Heretical Cathars also fed the frenzy with their insistence on the literal presence of the Devil on earth. After the Black Death and the period of two popes, in the 15th century with the world in crisis, the Devil became a much more important figure in Christianity, he began to be portrayed as a great ruler, a King, lording it over Hell.

A fury of demonology followed. There was a belief that strong demonic forces were all around as never before, that the Devil was clearly active on the earth, out looking for agents, forming pacts, having sexual relations with them, and that women, seduced by the Devil's illusions and demons, rode on beasts with the pagan goddess Diana at night over vast tracts of country, while on other nights they were summoned to pay her homage as their mistress. The recognition of pagan beliefs in society, that effectively there was a religion associated with the Devil, led theologians to assume that the Devil was present in the world in a way that had not been previously understood, that a genuine military threat existed and so began to campaign against him.

During the 15th century these ideas developed to the point where the Devil became a force that was out to destroy God. By the time the Church split with the Reformation, the notion existed that the Devil was inside the Church. This had happened with the early Church but followers were convinced at that time that he had been expelled. But for Bosch and Bruegel he had not been expelled. The Devil was a real person and he was grotesque.

The fascination for oriental grotesque creatures provides a context for some of the shapes of Satan. "The Greeks had rationalised fears in another, non-religious form, by the invention of monstrous races and animals which they believed to live in... India."⁵¹ In 77AD Pliny had given a definitive classical account of monsters. There was little objectivity about the freakish creatures assembled from a wide range of animals, but why should there be? Freaks equalled evil.

The degenerate wild man, the paranoid ogre, the maniac rattling his chains, the giggling fool, are all staple figures of an intolerant, irrational, medieval world who were expelled from the villages and towns. Existing somehow in fields and caves as a result of their expulsion, these creatures died a miserable lunatic death, but not before they became built into a composite image of misrule, dark, uncontrollable men, jabbering, freakish demons: devils.

Bosch would at times seem to wield the Devil's paintbrush. He made Hell so captivating.

Entr'acte Tracey Emin

*"I need art like I need God"*⁵²

"I'd found a way of looking at the world as disconnected images brought together for an unknown purpose. Without realizing it, I deliberately sought out the incongruities that would match my memories" James Rosenquist⁵³

IN ATTEMPTING to appreciate the context in which Bosch painted I have come to refute much of what has been written about him. In trying to consider him from a 21st century standpoint he may be incomprehensible. And yet. Many of his preoccupations are ours: the current obsession with death, debates about the spiritual dimension of life, faith seen as a battleground, exaggerated creationist belief and a coming apocalypse, the advances in science that challenge moral conscience, memory, loss, the attractions of wilderness – he is a figure for our times. Cue Tracey Emin.

Remember you shall die. The past is irreversible and irrecoverable, yet Emin's retrospective in Scotland in 2008 was an emotional *momento mori* as she mournfully attempted to recover her own past, endlessly. Candid, confessional, sentimental, trivial and derivative her work may be, with its bed à la Robert Rauschenberg, "Twombly-like paintings, Nauman-like neons, Bourgeois-like blankets, Schiele-like drawings" nevertheless it yanks life and art together in a confusing and profound way. As private trauma made public, she subverts all our illusions.⁵⁴ With her slice of life approach there is no mystery to her at all. Honest, passionate and painful, her art is life in the raw, one continuous stream of consciousness about love and loneliness, longing and loss. Her "resource is herself and her tragicomedies, cruel humiliations and rejoicings".⁵⁵ Her sexual history is better known than her artistic ability – something that with its religious iconography holds some surprises.

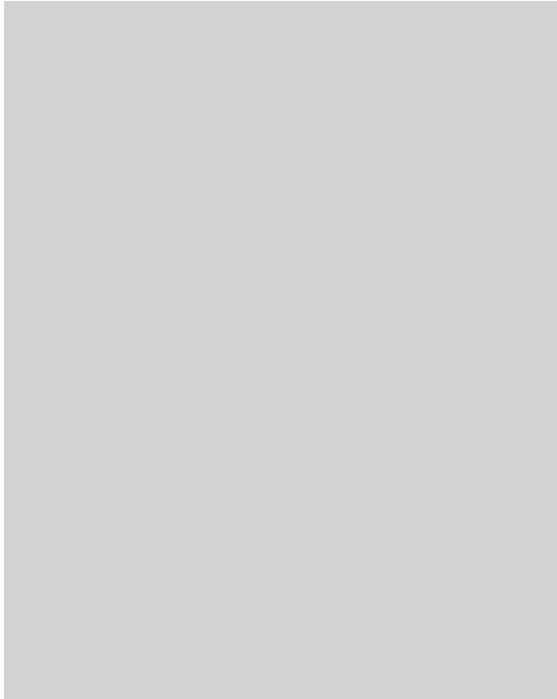
Celebrity and national treasure, *I've got it all*, an inkjet print of a photograph from the year 2000 shows our Tracey wallowing in cash up to her crotch. Feminist politics, social comment, artistic expression, narcissistic self-portrait, post-feminist social and political statement – it's got it all. And it's about as original as a brick. Whatever we are as human beings, we are infinitely more than our bodies. Deliberately offensive titillation, Emin is a century behind the intimate emotional experience and devouring intensity of Egon Schiele's portraits of himself masturbating: art with the power to move, excite and disturb. And he could draw.⁵⁶ Or over three centuries behind Artemisia Gentileschi, a strong woman painter if ever there was one, whose *La Pittura (Self –portrait as the Allegory of Painting)* of 1638-9 "made an audacious claim upon the core of artistic tradition, to create an entirely new image that was quite literally unavailable to any male artist" was a 17th century action painting.⁵⁷

In 1997, the Royal Academy gave itself over to a show it modestly called "Sensation". The rooms of Burlington House became a none too subtle marketing ploy for Charles Saatchi's collection as the Young British Artists were crowned as the iconoclasts of the 1990s. "Sensation" was their springboard to greater fame and infamy. It was deliberately confrontational.⁵⁸ It began the rise and rise of art as entertainment in a world where 'accessible' vies with 'relevant' as the ultimate cultural accolade. Was the work any good? Who cared? The artists were famous. Media exposure and money had arrived to define what is 'big art'. Emin's *Everyone I have ever slept with 1963-95* was there. It was later destroyed in a fire at an art warehouse in east London in 2004.⁵⁹ Her bed stole the show at the Turner Prize in 1999, but failed to win.⁶⁰ She has continued to offer the celebrated spectacle that has been "the sloppy mess of her life" including her selection by the British Council as the artist chosen to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2007.⁶¹ Entitled *Borrowed Light* she described the work on show as "both pretty and hardcore".

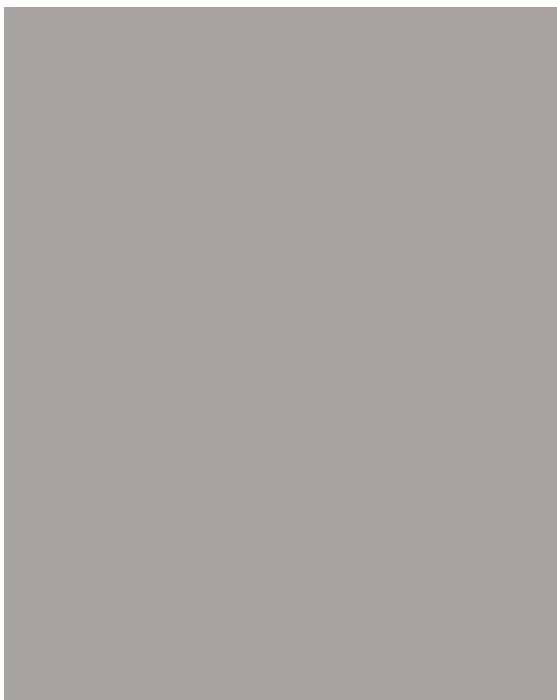
A loner, an outsider, she is now accepted at court. Elected to be a Royal Academician in 2007 by Britain's oldest art institution she is a part of that country's establishment.⁶² In a campaign to raise enough money (a mere £100 million) to keep Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* and *Diana and Callisto* in the UK, two pictures that have had a peripatetic existence, moved on by the unpredictable tides of

geopolitical catastrophe for over 300 years, our Tracey, the new RA, pointed out that if everyone in the country contributed the price of a packet of biscuits, it would be easy to purchase the paintings, signally failing to grasp that in these straightened times most people would rather have the biscuits. She did not consider contributing the price of an early quilt.

Anyone for Titian?



65 Tracey Emin, from the cover of
I Need Art Like I Need God 1998 with
essays by Neal Brown, Matthew
Collings and Sarah Kent



66 The Saatchi Gallery in London
14 April 2003. A visitor walks past
Marcus Harvey's *Myra Hindley*
(3.4x2.7m 1995)
© Peter MacDiarmid/Reuters

Apocalypse Now: *The Last Judgement*

"The impulse to preserve lies at the bottom of all art" Philip Larkin

"Like Milton, Bosch set out to show a Paradise Lost, "to justify the ways of God to man", but unlike Milton he did not see Lucifer as a tragic hero" Larry Silver⁶³

THE LAST JUDGEMENT in Vienna is a vast panoramic nightmare, a nightmare where virtually no one has passed the test and no one is saved.⁶⁴ Souls have been weighed and found wanting.⁶⁵ The elect residing in Heaven are very few in number. Pessimistic, moralistic, spiritualistic, visionary, tragic certainly; it is nevertheless a passionate statement of the artist's central belief that sinners are cast out of society and punished in Hell. It is a brilliant résumé of everything that weighs on the medieval spirit, an exercise in biblical exegesis rooted in the spirit of the age, late medieval northern renaissance culture. The eschatological scheme demonstrates belief in the morality of Church teaching. But this is no conventional *Last Judgement*.

The triptych was the perfect form for the drama of the Church. "The reality of the altarpiece is the reality of the liturgy."⁶⁶ Typical of the age, the way it was read at the time is essential to understanding Bosch. The narrative is straightforward. Outer wings introduce the main theme, continue the theme or portray the painting's donor with or without their patron saint. Once opened, the inner wings reflect the central action or there is a continuous narrative reading from side to side. The wings would be closed during Lent, shutting away the glory of the centrepiece, their grisaille imagery reflecting the sombre mood of those 40 days. After Compline and as darkness fell on the eve of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the service of Tenebrae would be celebrated marking the end of Holy Week. Each night 15 candles would be snuffed out, one after each psalm was sung, extinguishing the light of Christ.⁶⁷ The service would end in total darkness, hence the name. A book was slammed shut. The congregation departed in silence.

At midnight on Holy Saturday the ceremony began in darkness, then the new fire, *Lumen Christi*, would pierce the gloom. The praises of the Paschal candle were sung to a fourth century chant, the baptismal waters blessed, and the service progressed to the *Kyrie éléison*, the altar would be sensed, *Gloria in excelsis Deo sung*, the church bells rung, statues unveiled and the doors of the altarpiece opened. And once again, we might cross the 'miraculous threshold' to its sacred interior.⁶⁸

There was a great theatrical thrill about it all; candles, incense, bells, singing, glory; the 'Feast of feasts', the 'Solemnity of solemnities', the mystery of the Resurrection celebrated and the liturgical year began. The midnight service concluded with Easter Mass at dawn on Sunday. The elaborate edifice of the Holy Week services is unknown today, swept away in the 1950s when the 'century of the common man' came to exert its fascination among Catholic clergy, but in the time of Bosch the triptych was at the heart of the Church's theatre.

Essentially religious and painted on commission, the large Bosch triptychs "are a genre in their own right".⁶⁹ Belting considers the Vienna *Last Judgement* unconventional in that it undermines the familiar scheme



by telling a “linear story” that as the sequence proceeds from the Fall and ends in Hell it “reverses the post-historic message of the Last Judgment’s apocalyptic panorama”.⁷⁰ But that is the standard layout.

On the right of the painting in Vienna is the hellscape forever associated with Bosch. The fires of Hell provide a background to the sufferings of the damned. The gateway to the underworld is open for business. Yet as God presides over the central panel presumably the risen dead are to be seen beneath him, the torturers are already working overtime, on earth, divine and human punishment interchangeable. Humanity does not appear to be suffering, it does not even appear to have the will to resist. As omnivorous monsters set about their work, there is a grim acceptance of what fate awaits. Heaven and Hell appear inseparable.⁷¹

There are a number of questions to be considered along the way. What is the message? What is the connection between the outer wings and the central panel? Is it really by Bosch?



67 Jheronimus Bosch *The Last Judgment* Vienna, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste

Is it the painting commissioned in September 1504 by Philip the Fair? Has attention to individual details obscured understanding of the image? To what extent should it be considered in conjunction with the *Last Judgement* in Bruges, the fragment of a Last Judgement that is in Munich, *The Blessed and the Damned* wings of a possible *Last Judgement* in Venice and the apocalyptic anxiety of two panels in Rotterdam generally referred to as *The Flood*? And lastly, is it a Last Judgement at all?

In 1504 Bosch received a commission, to the value of 36 livres paid in advance for a '*grant tableau de peinture*', from Philip the Fair, Count of Flanders, Duke of Brabant, and King-elect of Castile, for an altarpiece of the '*Jugement de dieu assavoir paradis et Infer*', that it should be '*pour son très noble plaisir*' and '*neuf piets de hault et vnze petz de long*', approximately 2.49m by 3.04m.⁷²



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Jheronimus Bosch
St James and St Bavo
 Vienna, Gemäldegalerie
 der Akademie der
 bildenden Künste

This work has frequently been considered lost – if indeed, it was ever produced.⁷³ Despite the significant difference in its dimensions, it has also frequently been identified as the Vienna *Last Judgement*. It has been suggested that the additions of a frame and predella could make up the difference in the dimensions.⁷⁴ Also the saints portrayed on the outer wings, although unsatisfactory from the point of view of composition,⁷⁵ would provide a link to the heiress to the Spanish throne in St James, as patron saint of the *Reconquista*,⁷⁶ and to the Habsburgs via St Bavo, the patron saint of Ghent, in 1500 the birthplace of Charles V.⁷⁷ Thus we see one of the founding apostles portrayed as a poor pilgrim in the wilderness on the left and a high class convert to Christianity who finally withdrew from the world to become a hermit on the right, an unlikely pairing⁷⁸ – but nevertheless a statement of imperial objectives, hence the assumption that, as one would normally expect, they must connect to the original commission.

Except.

St Bavo, St Hippolytus or Philip the Fair? Around the mid-1490s, a financial advisor to Philip the Fair, Hippolyte de Berthoz, commissioned a *Martyrdom of St Hippolytus* that looks remarkably like the supposed Bavo in Bosch – minus the purse? The iconography of St Hippolyte was obscure to the point of non-existence until 2011 when a church in Poligny in Franche-Comté yielded a clue. Birthplace of Hippolyte de Berthoz it has been suggested that a triptych was commissioned shortly after 1493 when Franche-Comté was returned to Philip by France in accord with the Treaty of Senlis. The similarity between the iconography of the young duke, and the celestial protector of Berthoz and much venerated local saint was a fortuitous way of uniting them in one image and a smart way to present the sovereign to his new subjects. Whether the image ever left court, whether it went to Poligny, and whether the image is intended to be read as St Bavo or St Hippolyte are all unclear. But the link to the Burgundian-Castilian union through marriage is there with Philip in the guise of a saint shown to be the ideal ruler and worthy heir to the House of Burgundy, the sacred and the political linked through dynastic relations: an image of a peacemaker, benefactor and perfect sovereign who has dispensed with his traditional sword in favour of a purse from which he might dispense alms.⁷⁹

This virtuous couple, whoever they might be, shut the doors on Bosch's main preoccupation, sin. Bosch employs his signature monsters in a version of the standard medieval iconography of the *Last Judgement*, but if the life of everyone is in the balance when the Day of Judgement dawns, God has no souls left to weigh, infernal torment awaits us all. The damned are punished, the evil are tortured, "tortured in the manner in which we have sinned" – the punishment fits the crime. The stench of eternal misery rises from the legacy of Eve's sin and wafts across the horrific pandemonium of Hell.

It is a continuous story, a strip cartoon of sin. We move from the origin of all evil with the devils cast out of Heaven in the Fall of the Rebel Angels, to the Fall of Man attributed directly to Eve, leading in turn to the punishments of Hell by monstrous instruments of torture – Eve's legacy of sin. Sin, guilt, fear: the standard late medieval formula that Bosch sets out.

Thus the Creation of Eve, the Temptation of Adam, and the Expulsion from Paradise are set out beneath an atmospheric scene of St Michael battling with a swarm of insect-like, reptilian devils. It is a view of the world firmly rooted in the Middle Ages, a misogynistic view of woman's part in the Devil's grand scheme, an idea reinforced by the hugely successful 1487 publication *Malleus maleficarum* – the 'hammer of witches' – and linked to apocalyptic imagery of the end of time with Philip cast in the role of 'last emperor' ready to usher in the new age. John of Lichtenberger had predicted that Philip was the man in 1488, a fact reinforced in 1496 by Wolfgang Aytinger who actually named Philip as Christ's last representative on earth, and predicted the world's end coming in 1509.⁸⁰

If ever an image was required to drive humanity towards repentance and penitence, Philip must have felt this was it. Has the Last Judgement clearly been made? Is this the result?

One thing is certain, very few people make it to Heaven, the elect are very special indeed. No souls are left in the balance. The time for intercessions has clearly passed, the Virgin and St John relegated behind Christ in a composition reminiscent of illuminations from devotional Books of Hours. With its tortures, machines, fiery landscape and exaggerated proportions, the Vienna *Last Judgement* sets out the collective fate of mankind. As the world became submersed under a dissolute sea of evil, Heaven was never more inaccessible, “many are called, but few are chosen”,⁸¹ thus nothing would be too gruesome, no demons too excessive, no punishment too terrifying, no depiction of the wages of sin too encyclopedic, with which to confront humanity in search of redemption, its ultimate absolution, and escape from the terrors of end-time. Eternal damnation was the reward for sin and Bosch was commissioned to paint it.⁸²

As a part of standard pious Christian instruction it is a basic primer for the times, Thomas à Kempis’s “perpetual prisoners in hell” would recognize the imagery. A Kempis also noted the importance of how the “fear of hell might withhold us from sin, if the love of God does not withdraw us from it”.⁸³ Hence the apocalyptic display on the right should come as no surprise. As a deterrent to sin, this painting is standard fare, but its overall concept and execution is magnificent. No retouching, inept restoration or inadequate attempts at preservation of the Vienna *Last Judgement* can blunt its impact or deflect its power. Yet they may lead to some questioning its authenticity as has been the case with the *Last Judgement* in Bruges. Nevertheless it represents the spirit of the age, *Spiritus Mundi*, the spirit of the world – or at least the world of western Christendom and the apocalyptic panic that gripped it.

“Spe salvi facti sumus”

*“Et iterum venturus est cum glória iudicare vivos, et mortuos: cujus regni non erit finis”*⁸⁴

WE MUST step back for a moment now to consider what we are looking at. Is it the Last Judgement, that final and eternal judgement of us all by God? Is this the scene *after* the resurrection of the dead and the second coming of Jesus Christ, when “the son of man shall come in his majesty” and all the angels with Him, with all the nations gathered before him, the sheep separated from the goats, the cursed on His left hand cast “into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels” and the elect on His right, of whom there are certainly very few, transported into life everlasting as the truth of each man’s relationship with God is laid bare?⁸⁵ Is this the moment at which judgement is passed on all those that have ever lived, and those languishing in Purgatory are released into Heaven? Or is it something else?

Has the fact that Bosch was commissioned, and paid in advance in September 1504 by Philip the Fair, for a *Last Judgement* that many have been confused with this specific picture, misled people into assuming that this is the result, and that therefore this *is indeed* a Last Judgement?

The iconography of the universal Last Judgement has Christ Almighty enthroned in glory in the company of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, the Apostles, saints, and all the angels, beneath which there are ‘many mansions’ – basically two, divided by a river of fire. Trumpets sound, the dead arise from their tombs, and St Michael is usually on hand to weigh their souls. All standard stuff that we see in Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, Memling, Bouts et al. So when we look at this painting, the question must be addressed, are we witnessing the general judgement or not? Marijnissen believes ‘this triptych does not give rise to any controversy’ and goes on to quote Hollander that “while he [Bosch] did not advance any other truth than the established one, he certainly offered a pessimistic interpretation of it.”⁸⁶

But.

Here, there are no souls left to weigh, no St Michael to weigh them, no dead clambering

feverishly from their graves: has the Last Judgement been made or have we not yet arrived at that moment in history? Where are we in the timeline of events?

Does it matter? It's only a title? Again, but.

It can be argued, and has been, that this painting is a Last Judgement but that it does not follow the traditional iconography. That despite the lack of so many of the symbols we might expect to find we may still observe the bliss of being in Heaven for a few lucky souls, and the pain of Hell for the majority. Two questions arise: has the Catholic meaning of the Last Judgement, for whatever reason, been misunderstood, and has the question of timing in relation to a verdict on one's time on earth been ignored? Because, if this painting is considered a depiction of the Particular (or individual) Judgement, that according to Christian eschatology is the verdict given by God immediately after death that leads the majority to experience a foretaste of both the torments of Hell and the pleasures of Heaven as they await the Resurrection, then the character of Bosch must be reconsidered.⁸⁷ He was, perhaps, rather an optimist, hopeful about mankind's eventual destiny, and not the pessimist he is conventionally, and almost universally, cast.

This idea of a wayside halt on the journey to ultimate Paradise, a state that might involve some purification and healing that could and should mature the soul for one's final communion with God, developed into the doctrine of Purgatory. It was always considered an interim stage. Most of us could expect a stopover in Purgatory, but that visit, for however long, held out the possibility of a second chance of reaching Heaven at the Last Judgement.

Bosch painted *Particular Judgements* not *Last Judgements*.⁸⁸ It was the preoccupation with death following the Black Death that had led to the doctrine of Purgatory, the associated industry of prayer and its commercialisation to ease the passage of souls on their journey through penitential misery.⁸⁹ As noted earlier in this chapter, a system of mutual support was developed, culminating when Bosch was in his twenties in 1476, whereby those in Purgatory awaiting their release to eternal joy could show some gratitude for the prayers of the living by returning prayers back to them for future use, while the Church chose to dispense this 'treasury of merit' to the faithful to shorten the time spent doing penance in Purgatory, the granting of which was as an indulgence.⁹⁰

The obsession with Purgatory, and it was an obsession, can be seen in the investment made in the soul-prayer racket from around 1450 until 1520 when the system collapsed. Late Medieval wills catalogue the upsurge in endowments for Masses for the dead as Purgatory-centred faith in northern Europe took hold in the lifetime of Bosch.⁹¹ Sinners piled up their reparations for sin to merit their claims to spending less time in Purgatory in order to do something about their own salvation. Luther's attack on this investment in easing one's passage to salvation as a clerical confidence trick came too late for Bosch to reconsider. His lifetime was dominated by the universal belief in Purgatory, the Particular Judgement that would despatch us there, and hence his production of these images.

THE REAL MESSAGE of the Last Judgement is also one of hope; that whilst we may approach the final coming of Christ whom 'we await in joyful hope to judge the living and the dead' with some fear, we still pray for the dead in the hope of their resurrection: "For we are saved by hope."⁹² Salvation is not a given, we have to work for our own redemption, our faith is hope, and "in the fullness of faith... Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering".⁹³ Thus if we accept that the gift Christians receive is hope, as Benedict XVI spelt out in 2007, then that hope is the equivalent of faith.⁹⁴ Redemption would result in the restoration of the lost Paradise; that redemption was to be found in the absolute and unconditional love of Christ that would give new meaning to life, and through Him mankind would become certain of God.

The prospect of judgement has always influenced Christians. 'He will come again in

glory to judge the living and the dead' summoned their conscience and gave them hope in God's justice. They looked forward in anticipation to the hour of justice, and were reminded of it as they left church where a Last Judgement was frequently hung at the western end as a symbol of their responsibility for their lives – and where, in Bruges, this painting may have once, even originally, been intended to stand or hang. As the iconography of the Last Judgement developed more prominence was given to the frightening aspects, and the splendour of hope became concealed beneath the horrors. But faith in the Last Judgement was always seen as first and foremost one of hope. A belief in God's justice meant innocent sufferers lived in the certitude of hope of eternal life, because a world without God was a world without hope. Only God could create justice, and faith gave people the certainty that He did so.

Thus the Judgement became not primarily an image of terror but one that was their decisive image of hope. It was an image of consolation because in justice there was also grace. Justice was always what the congregation prayed for; it was the crucial question they asked of history and of God, in the full knowledge that we all work out our own salvation "with fear and trembling".⁹⁵ The paintings were intended to make congregations tremble, in hope.

There had been uncertainty regarding the fate of the departed between death and the general resurrection (confirmed by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215) with the scriptural basis for a distinct judgement at the moment of death unclear. There was never any doubt that forfeiture of the joys of Heaven began from the moment of death, and that the penalty of loss would be augmented by other sufferings, but as to whether the flames of Hell were stoked immediately for devils following their particular judgement or were to be held back until the end of the world was a matter of dispute. Similarly, reprobate souls not immediately destined to be among the elect, were believed reprieved from torment by fire until reunited with their bodies at the Resurrection. Purgatorial fires were still nevertheless believed by many to be lit immediately to purify those souls that were not perfectly just. Still, the Particular Judgement holds out hope for the majority of mankind resting in Purgatory – that's what made it so attractive. As to whether one might enjoy the essential ecstasy of Heaven before the end of time was hotly debated, if one's soul would gain an early vision of God while lodged in some comfortable dwelling or languish in Purgatory awaiting final glorification unclear. The hesitation of most writers to clarify their thoughts on the matter led to endless debate throughout the Middle Ages.⁹⁶ However, whilst martyrs and some other classes of saints were certain of a prompt reward for their devotion and sacrifice, and souls free from sin were at once admitted into Heaven, *mox in caelum recipi*, most theologians agreed that whilst they were under the protection of the Humanity of Jesus Christ, the just would not 'enjoy the intuitive or facial vision of God' until the Resurrection.

Unconventional as this idea may be, if Bosch painted the *Last Judgement* then it could therefore be seen as a vision of hope rather than despair. However, Bosch does not appear to be representing the Last Judgement – in Vienna, in Bruges, or anywhere else. He was painting Particular Judgements, and thus may be considered even more of an optimist. If the judgement of God is hope, as both justice and grace, the artist has attempted to remind his audience that a break in their journey to Paradise existed, that it may well entail a painful encounter but that in that pain there lay salvation. That transforming moment was outside earthly time, the time of passage to communion with God in the Body of Christ. Purification may well be through fire, whilst the purifying and expiatory suffering of souls in the afterlife might also receive 'solace and refreshment' through the Eucharist, prayer and almsgiving.

Thus it was not only a message of hope but good business practice for the Church.⁹⁷

A question of dates – still elusive in the grip of science, some dates matter
“Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate” William of Occam⁹⁸

WHEN WAS the Vienna *Last Judgement* painted? Artistically it anticipates *The Garden of Earthly Delights* where Bosch gives full rein to his vision of the nightmare of human life and the world as Hell. Belting, Koreny, Silver and others have linked the two. De Tolnay's view as to its authenticity waxed and waned, but his chronology from 1937 put it after *The Haywain* and before *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, based on stylistic analysis.⁹⁹ In 1904 Glück had linked the Spanish saints portrayed on the outer wings and Bax, in 1983, the resemblance of St Bavo to Philip the Fair. Whilst over the years it was challenged, and the theoretical development of his work seriously questioned, reflectography and dendrochronology have opened up a minefield for the Bosch art detectives. Science has led to speculation on a grand scale. Confronted by additional information obtained through the uses of today's technology may well lead the viewer to think “magic”, when what it really does is help us to look more closely.¹⁰⁰

Following on from dendrochronological examination by Peter Klein¹⁰¹ and chronologies published in 2004 by Fritz Koreny and Frédéric Elsig, together with the work of Bernard Vermet who has written and spoken on this subject seemingly continuously since 2000, dating the Vienna *Last Judgement* is still problematic.¹⁰² It is worth explaining and taking a point of view.

The way dendrochronology works is relatively simple. As a tree grows, it puts on a new growth or tree-ring every year, just under the bark. Trees grow, and put on tree-rings, at different rates according to the weather in any given year: a wider ring in a favourable year and a narrower ring in an unfavourable year. Thus, over a long period of time (say 60 years or more) there will be a corresponding sequence of tree-rings giving a pattern of wider and narrower rings which reflect droughts, cold summers, and so on. In effect, the span of years during which a tree has lived will be represented by a unique fingerprint, which can be detected in other geographically-similar tree-ring chronologies. Vermet stated early on that “there had to be a correlation between the age of the planks and the age of the paintings”¹⁰³ but as the Dendrochronology Laboratory at Oxford explains “whilst the principle behind tree-ring dating is a simple one, the determination of what is an actual match is much more involved”.¹⁰⁴ The results are not irrefutable proof and therefore not conclusive.

We can take the dating of trees and thence panels too literally. “The interpretation of the accuracy of the dates arrived at by the tree's ‘fingerprint’ depends on two main factors: first, whether there is a complete database of tree-rings from the particular region from which a sample comes; second, more subjective factors like how long did the wood lie around before it was used, was any part cut off, is it possible that it is re-used wood, etc. *If you have a good database, you should get pretty good dates for when the tree was cut down.* Much of the rest is informed conjecture, and often depends on the nature and original use of the object that is being dated – did it require new wood?”¹⁰⁵

Thus, we can establish precisely when the tree grew, and a reasonably accurate, though debateable, date (or date-range) when the tree was felled. Even this requires luck because it means obtaining the softer, outer parts of the tree, the very parts a panel-maker tried to avoid when producing panels for an artist. Because the panels may have been taken from the earliest years of a tree's growth we may convince ourselves of a certain date for a panel's origin, when in fact it is the felling date that is critical. We also know, roughly, the earliest date a panel could have been used for painting. By definition this all means we do not know what we are missing, the unknown unknowns. It comes down to a series of factors coming together, laws of averages and probability theory.¹⁰⁶

At first sight, dendrochronology can seem the answer to the art historian's dream, an absolute dating process accurate to a single year. However, in reality, it raises as many questions

as it apparently solves. Art historians relying on sheets of numbers that mask the fantasy of their conclusions have led to the production of papers full of wishful reasoning with more enthusiasm than rigour.

Koreny puts the Vienna *Last Judgment* at around 1505 in the same group of work that he locates the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. The basis of his dating is like De Tolnay's, stylistic considerations, "*stilistischen Erwägungen*". He also includes the Ghent *Christ Carrying the Cross* in this period, something to be addressed later. This is all put down by Vermet as connoisseurship, something he clearly holds little brief for, along with Koreny's assertion that the second period of work attributed to Bosch was in fact executed by another painter entirely, a young member of the Bosch workshop. Vermet poses the sensible question "If somebody else can develop Bosch's style, then why not Bosch himself". Again, something to be addressed later.

The Koreny order is based on the stylistic analyses of Bosch's underdrawings by Van Schoute in 1965 and Filedt Kok in 1971 who divided the works by Bosch into two distinctive groups: the first group has under drawings that exist of a few simple quick strokes and a smooth style of painting with sharp contours. The second group has underdrawings that are characterized by extensive parallel hatching from top left to bottom right and a powerful, but thicker and cruder way of painting, as well as a complete new interpretation of the landscape. Baldass charted the artist's career in terms of his approach to landscape.¹⁰⁷ Whilst this rather bizarrely meant that he saw the Brussels *Crucifixion*¹⁰⁸ with its distant panorama of Jerusalem (that appears not unlike 's-Hertogenbosch) as a late work, rather than an early image that descends from Van der Weyden and Memling, he links the *Last Judgement* in Vienna with the Ghent *St Jerome*, the Lisbon *St Antony*, and the *Hermit Saints* in Venice.¹⁰⁹

Roger van Schoute notably unveiled three different types of preliminary "sketch" on the paintings of Bosch at the time of the 1967 's-Hertogenbosch exhibition (endorsed by Sonkes in 1970), and in a later publication in 2000. He quickly drew attention to the fact that this discovery was *not conclusive of anything*. The underdrawings that were discovered (the "sketches" referred to) might be by another hand in the workshop, the drawings with which they were compared might not be by Bosch either, and so on. Whilst the style of underdrawing applied with a broad brush or a brush point could conceivably have been executed by the same hand, methods and styles of application are experimented with and do change (a fact endorsed by Vermet but disputed by Koreny), one's style of drawing seldom does. From experience, the odd exercise may be tried, an attempt may be made to change one's approach to draughtsmanship, but over time, drawn marks that are made, on whatever surface, always remain recognisably by the same hand. Over the years mark making certainly develops, but authorship remains identifiably visible.¹¹⁰

Vermet cannot have it both ways. Klein shows an earliest felling date for the Baltic oak used for the *Garden of Earthly Delights* as 1458 and Vermet argues that it was painted around 1480. The wood used for the Vienna *Last Judgement* was felled in (or after) 1474 and he again puts the execution of the work 22 years later "around 1496". Why? In 2001 Vermet wrote "By comparing these patterns [of the annual rings] it is possible to calculate the year corresponding with the final growth ring. The oak panels used for paintings tend to lack at least nine and, on average, fifteen growth rings due to the removal of the outermost sapwood, which is soft and unusable. Moreover, wood has to be allowed to rest and dry out for at least two years and often much longer before it is used. In other words, if the final growth ring corresponds with 1500, say, the panel will not have been painted before 1511 (1500 + 9 years of sapwood + 2 years' drying) and, on average, not before 1517 (1500+15+2)."¹¹¹ But he has previously admitted: "This technique provides a *terminus post quem* – a date *after* which the work must have been created. It does not, however, tell us how much later, which means that the value of dendrochronology is limited."¹¹² Silver also notes that the science "must be used with caution



69 Top left Dieric Bouts
The Roads to Paradise and *The Fall of the Damned*
Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts

70 Top right Jan van Eyck
Crucifixion and *The Last Judgement*
New York, Metropolitan Museum

71 Above Hans Memling
The Last Judgement
Gdansk, Muzeum Narodowe

72 Right Joos van Cleve
The Last Judgement
New York, Metropolitan Museum



– as another form of evidence, but not as a conclusive basis”.¹¹³ Inconclusive, to be used with caution, dates *after which* – these are all signalling the fact that whilst dendrochronology provides verifiable results it can just as easily be argued as something of a speculative adventure when used to determine the date of execution for a work of art.

Scientific results must never be looked at in isolation or, as Vermet himself phrased it, “at the expense of other aspects”.¹¹⁴ But this is what has been done, repeatedly. Others have simply accepted the data at face value and without question. Klein’s work has never been confirmed by a separate independent authority. Suppose the boards had simply been pushed to the back of the store? Suppose an earlier work was reused? Marijnissen has suggested just this in relation to an altarpiece commissioned in 1480, a fact substantiated by the accounts of the Brotherhood of Our Lady that record Bosch buying the damaged “wings of an old altarpiece” in that year.¹¹⁵ The rings of the six panels used to make up the central section of the Vienna *Last Judgement* range from 1465 back to 1304! Good quality wood was hard to obtain. When you found it, you bought it and kept it.

If we accept the connection between the Vienna *Last Judgement* and the *Garden* then it is worth quoting other authorities. In 2002 both Gerdt Unverfehrt and Hans Belting argued for a date after 1500 for the *Garden of Delights*, linking the work to discovery of the New World. Whilst Baldass in 1960 did not give specific dates to any work he nevertheless recognises the two saints on the exterior of the Vienna *Last Judgement* as a culmination of greater mastery by Bosch.¹¹⁶ How right he was. Combe would have us believe that as Bosch got older, his technique became less free, an observation that he puts forward as the basis for arguing that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* was painted before *The Haywain* and *The St Antony triptych* – whereas the reverse is more likely, the certainties and confidence gained from experience usually bringing greater freedom and a loosening of artistic expression.¹¹⁷

Occam’s razor, a principle often invoked to defend reductionism and nominalism, is a law of parsimony – the principle that things are connected or behave in the simplest most economical way. Simplicity is subjective; the simplicity and beauty of mathematical form does not alone trump first hand identifiable observation and experience. Occam’s ‘razor’ can be used to shave away some of the wilder theories, but Vermet should remember that William argued in favour of empiricism, not against it. Excitement at the prospect of giving credence to the 1917 article by Baldass with regards his claim that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* was a youthful work by Bosch has brushed aside observation.¹¹⁸ It spreads confusion to extend Occam and the law of parsimony into regions where they do not belong. These new Knights of the Razor are highly logical, very convincing, admirably detached, vigilant and constructive critics, and anything but *raseurs sympathiques*. They seem to forget, or ignore, the pulse of a picture, perception a strictly marginal experience, dendrochronology a disconcertingly simple solution to dating.

A version of Occam sometimes attributed to Einstein, ‘everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler’ seems more appropriate here.¹¹⁹ It is also closer to Occam’s original intention, which was not meant as guidance when choosing between different theories. Hogarth’s cry ‘to lead the eye a wanton kind of chase’ should rein us in from sometimes being too impatient. He called connoisseurs ‘dealers in dark pictures’, a group of gentlemen he, and doubtless the Knights, could be viciously satirical about, but he had a genius for catching the essentials. One of them is to look.

Originals, copies, and influences

THE DIFFICULTIES experienced in connecting commissions with extant works is not confined to Bosch. Dieric Bouts had run an atelier in Leuven for a decade before he received his first official commission in 1468. This was for both the four panel *Justice of Emperor Otto III* known to be unfinished when he died in 1475, and a *Last Judgement* triptych for the council chamber. As with the Bosch *Last Judgement* triptych in Vienna so with the Bouts *Last Judgement* triptych in Leuven – now to be seen in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille: the dimensions of the surviving work do not match those of the commission. In both cases the artist's surviving work is smaller than those stated on the order. But then, with Bouts, a hypothetical central panel is missing. Hence any hypothesis is controversial.

Nevertheless, in the case of Bouts, since 1899 when Camille Benoit assumed *The Roads to Paradise* and *The Fall of the Damned* were the side wings of the triptych produced for the city council, and known to have been completed by Bouts in 1470, this view went uncontested until 1965.¹²⁰ This raises the possibility that another *Last Judgement* triptych was completed by Bouts before or after the commission in Leuven. As it does with the Bosch in Vienna.

Whatever the truth about which work this is, there can be no doubt that Bouts' work diverges from convention. He does not show the Blessed being welcomed into Paradise but shows the Righteous inhabiting an earthly paradise similar to the work of Bosch. There is even a fountain of life. In Bouts it is a rather grand wayside shrine like something seen on a pilgrimage. Various groups of people converge on a green hill far away from which they ascend into Heaven in the company of angels. This stems from an interest in the mystical writings of Denys van Leeuwen and the concept of an earthly and heavenly paradise.¹²¹ In the context of a Last Judgement and the Particular Judgement, it should also be noted that Denys claimed to experience spiritual emergencies by way of divine ecstasies that lasted hours, during which he encountered souls languishing in Purgatory.¹²²

However, the two Bouts panels do display some conventional elements expected of a Last Judgement. The *Hell* panel can be related to the Van Eyck diptych in the Metropolitan (that was completed by an assistant or two) where the sinners fall into an abyss within a hieratically organised vision of Heaven and Hell, whilst it is possible Bouts also referred to the lost St Michael altarpiece by Van Eyck that displays similar elements and ideas.¹²³ Also in reference to Van Eyck, elements of Bouts' paradise relate to the panoramic landscape of *The Adoration of the Lamb* in the Ghent altarpiece. A *Last Judgement* painted on linen, after Dieric Bouts, and now in Munich, supposedly "conveys the overall impression of Bouts' *Last Judgement*."¹²⁴

The likelihood of the Van Eyck diptych serving as a devotional object, an aid to devotion and an inspiration for meditation, is quite likely considering the restricted format and miniaturist style. The small size and wealth of detail encourage any viewer's close scrutiny, probably when regularly kneeling and praying in front of it. The intellectual illumination that might be gained by contemplating such an image in private could have been seen as a step along the Christian path to the Divine Light, an intimate presentation for an educated patron, supported in this case by the lengthy Latin texts inscribed on the frames. The possible donor can be seen confronting the audience from the foot of the Crucifixion: a suggestion made by several writers with regards the elegantly dressed man to the right of the cross. As he witnesses the event, possibly intended as the depiction of a vision, the audience might hope to share the experience, a primary religious goal for contemporary viewers.¹²⁵

By engaging the viewer to construct meaning through personal beliefs, in this case it is the Virgin and her companions at the foot of the panel whose grief first draws the viewer in to share their feelings in an empathetic response to a scene set in a recognisably natural world. Their reflection mirrored in the shield hanging from the soldier's belt involves us more and

draws us in further, linking the space of the painting with that of ourselves, penetrating the tension between the picture plane and the viewer. The believability of the scene, its setting, the vista of Jerusalem, the costumes, the extraordinary detail, all sets the viewer up for the compressed fantasy of the right hand *Last Judgement's* novel formulation where the damned and the saved are set above and below Christ in Heaven, displaying the stigmata, and surrounded by references to the Passion.

The elect are seated around the Apostles in their glory with the Virgin and St John the Baptist above them flanking Christ in Majesty. A choir of virgins look directly at us as they doubtless sing His praise. A giant St Michael dominates the middle ground astride a fissure that separates the land and the sea as they surrender up their dead, above the skeletal figure of Death, lording it over a medieval bestiary tearing apart wretched Hell-bound sinners.

And what a Hell, an underworld from which there is no escape, and a world away from Bosch. The images may be terrifying, they are certainly not funny. There is no humour here to lighten their appeal. The material and the spiritual confront the viewer in a marriage of text and image challenging everyone to pray for deliverance from sin and death to salvation and rebirth in Heaven.

Adjustments to the storyline were always being made by artists. Joos van Cleve painted a *Last Judgement* around 1520-25. Christ appears in a burst of light at the moment of judgement, perhaps suggested by Augustine's comment that "that sun of righteousness" who brings "the brightness of eternal life" quoting Matthew's gospel describing the Last Judgement when "the righteous [shall] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of heaven."¹²⁶ With the assistance of St Michael, but unusually without the support of the Virgin and John the Baptist, He is seen dispensing justice, the just to the left admitted to Paradise as the damned are condemned to the flames of Hell on the right.¹²⁷ The reduced number of figures in Heaven may well have been a Protestant interpretation or more simply, and likely, just a way of increasing the focus on Christ.¹²⁸

In Rogier van der Weyden's *Last Judgement* in Beaune, St Michael appears larger than Christ as he moves forward to the edge of the frame, "a graceful, impassive, hypnotic figure advancing out of the painting is almost as terrifying as the torments of Hell".¹²⁹ It is all very dramatic, even St Michael's red and gold patterned cope swings with a flaming movement echoing the fires of Hell; Christ, serene and inscrutable, the arrangement of his cloak reflecting the arc of the rainbow "within the golden zone of Heaven"; the resurrected emerge from the earth larger than the figures whose souls are in the balance, and significantly the personification of sins outweigh the personifications of virtues; the terrified faces of the damned struggling to avoid their fate, tumble across the vast polyptych towards Hell, the few who are saved moving only slightly less hesitantly towards the gates of Paradise.

The conventional *Last Judgement* models of Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, and Memling all show variations on the theme but are certainly Last Judgements. The Bosch is not. But he would certainly learn from his compatriots, and take, when it suited him. The works of Memling "from the period 1470- 80 would have provided a model of unified landscape space in which to distribute various small-figure scenes. This kind of composition informs all of the landscapes of the Bosch triptych, whose small figure groups move within open pockets of space piled up to high horizons punctuated by mountain structures (and city profiles in the Hell panel)."¹³⁰ Certainly Memling adhered to Flemish pictorial traditions with his thoughtful amalgam of his two predecessors Van Eyck and Rogier, and the possible Bosch Crucifixion now in Brussels is akin to that traditional formulation and its conventions.

The question of originals, copies, and influences is complex. No more so than with Cranach the Elder, and in particular his apparent so-called copy of the Bosch so-called *Last Judgement* in Vienna.¹³¹ The discipline of making a copy was a thriving art in the workshops of

illuminators in the Middle Ages, but the copying of work by contemporaries was something new when it began in the Low Countries in the 15th century. Copies were a way of life.

ALL THE MASTERS made copies, and some were relentlessly copied.¹³² Copying by an apprentice was a part of every painter's training, making use of tracing, stencilling and squaring up. Then there were copies made as a developmental stage in composition, and copies made to commission or for sale on the open market – clients ordering copies of well-known paintings: a fact we may find hard to understand today. Hence we can see exact copies, free copies, replicas and pastiches.¹³³ Model books were used as *aide-mémoires*. Underdrawings and independent drawings were made as a part of the process of producing a painting in a workshop. Autograph drawings attributed with any certainty are non-existent before Bosch.

Van der Weyden's work was copied by the workshop on a systematic basis. The growing trend to private devotion was the chief motivating factor in creating and maintaining a profitable market. The workshop responded to meet those demands.¹³⁴ Specialised collaborators were employed to ensure the master's profitability was maintained. None of this was considered fraudulent. Of course, there must have been unlicensed borrowing, but drawings were exchanged and shared and considered common property. It was another world to what we would expect today. The sheer volume, quality and importance of the copies are commensurate with the importance of the artist.

Similarly, the Hans Memling *Last Judgement* commissioned by the Medici's agent Angelo Tani, completed in 1471, stolen en route to Florence by Paul Benecke, and installed in the Church of Our Lady in Gdansk. Magnificently peopled with contorted nudes, it appears to have been drawn from articulated models.¹³⁵ In that detail it displays similarities with the Cranach copy of Bosch. 'The entrance of the blessed into Paradise (Memling) and Jesus receiving the dead into purgatory (Cranach) both give the same impression, figures created from stock



73 Lucas Cranach *Flügelaltar mit dem Jüngsten Gericht* Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

models.’¹³⁶ Cranach appears to have created a portfolio of physical types that he adapted to his own purposes for the streamlined workshop business that he established and managed. Needing to meet the increased appetite for work from the studio he created a stock of ready-made motifs and figures, and hired a team that could execute those details competently on demand. The lack of preliminary drawings for most of his paintings has been explained by this degree of standardisation, and the development of an adaptive style that facilitated the ‘variations on a theme’ necessary to ensure each painting’s integrity. But it did ensure that the workshop was both economical in the use of its time, and profitable. One result of this artistic homogeneity is the remarkably weak bone and muscle structure of some of his figures. Unlike Dürer, Cranach’s was not a studio that had recourse to 15 measurements in order to draw a knee! But whereas Dürer mythologised himself as a Christ-like redeemer of humanity and dramatized the anguish of creativity in his print *Melancholia I*, Cranach’s personality disappears in professionalism. He may have been Luther’s PR man (and godfather to his son), his mythopoeic work crucial to the success of the Reformation, whilst still producing work for the Catholic Church as well, including working for Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, the man whose sale of indulgences had driven Luther to protest in the first place. Friendship, art, and ideological purity were all very well, but for Cranach, business was business. His mass-produced images made Luther’s the most familiar face in 16th century Europe, definitive icons of the new religion.

We know a great deal about Cranach, far more than we do, or can even hope to know, about Bosch. His studio was a picture-factory, not akin to Warhol’s Factory as some suggest, but nevertheless a production line of standardised replicas and variants that flowed from the hands of apprentices, assistants, journeymen and family. The master-cum-entrepreneur never even touched some of them even while he was alive, and some of his ‘signature’ pictures were posthumous. However, he did become the 16th century’s Helmut Newton. His emaciated sinners in medieval Hell look as though Hell has its delights. Cranach’s obsession with sex and death is clear from his depiction of the sinful and depraved nature of humanity, his stagey sadomasochism, his delight in wickedness, his understanding of desire, artificial ideals of beauty and sexual attraction. His sense of scale and perspective were minimal to non-existent, his grasp of anatomy is hidden beneath the erotica, scrupulous observation was not for him if it got in the way of exaggerated sensuality and sexual innuendo. Our sinful nature is clearly too dark and too evil for us to obtain God’s forgiveness; a few of us might only get that through His excessive grace. But in the meantime the artist certainly enjoys his subject matter from a svelte Eve to the theatre of cruelty. Look more closely and, no matter who actually painted the work, you begin to wonder if there was anything beyond the workshop’s studio assistants’ ability to capture figurative depiction, from the primitive to the sacred and otherworldly, from the milk-white nudes up against dark foliage to Christ staring straight back at us.¹³⁷ His Venus is sexy,¹³⁸ his Salomé clearly a snake-eyed slayer of men, his Margaret of Austria has lost her Habsburg jaw,¹³⁹ he seems to have wanted his women like Marilyn Monroe wearing little but their jewellery,¹⁴⁰ frequently presenting a severed head on a platter,¹⁴¹ or stabbing themselves.¹⁴² Dramatic, humorous and harrowing by turns, he clearly understood the Fall of Man, and he knew how to appeal to his audience. There was sly eroticism, elegant stylisation and, at times, his humour only emphasised the horror of it all, the tormented bodies, the crucified writhing their way out of the wood of the cross. He knew how to make his audience believe that God made Man, but is forever unknowable.

God smiled on Cranach; a skilled operator churning out work who became one of the wealthiest burghers in Wittenberg, and three times its mayor. He created the visual language of Protestantism, enslaving imagination to didactic programmes,¹⁴³ but he had a shrewd eye to the main chance, always looking for another profitable line: a stereotyped likeness here, a heraldic device there, a woodcut of a hunting incident on the side, or an illustrated catalogue advertising

the indulgences available for venerating relics to be sold as a pilgrim souvenir. The needs of this mass production could only be satisfied by evolving a style that allowed for delegation of the more mechanical aspects of each commission. Pattern drawings of everything meant that the work of one hand became indistinguishable from another. The virtuosity has nothing to do with piety and everything to do with merchandising, Cranach was a luxury brand. His workshop lingered on for years after him in slow decline. His second son Lucas, his grandson Augustin, his great grandson Lucas, all perpetuated the stable, the pictures simply getting weaker with repetition, feeble copies by feeble hands. The Cranach-not-Cranach debate rivals the Bosch-not-Bosch debate, the estimated dates and implied authenticity – we simply know a lot more about the German. Cranach's signature is no more confirmation of a work by his hand or a definition of quality than it is for Bosch, it does not even guarantee superior workshop craftsmanship. Nothing carried Cranach's signature until after he was 30. The demands for his services had to be met: everyone wanted a portrait of Luther, the Catholics wanted altarpieces, Albrecht fancied himself as St Jerome, those at court wanted erotica.

Why did Cranach copy? Because there was a market, because he could, and because he had a studio to keep occupied. Tradesmen cannot be too choosy about their customers either. He never drew Albrecht from life, he probably never met him: he copied his features from Dürer's portrait of 1519. It saved time. He was a businessman. The copy of Bosch raises more questions than it answers. It is not a copy of the painting in Vienna attributed to Bosch. Or maybe it is? It may be considered a replica of another version, an earlier work or even a different painting. Cranach made his 'copy' of the Vienna *Last Judgement* around 1524. He visited the Netherlands on a diplomatic errand in 1508 and the influence of Quentin Massys became evident afterwards.¹⁴⁴ Copy or replica? The departures from the painting in Vienna could be because it was painted by Cranach "during his sojourn in the Netherlands, after a lost original by Bosch." The idea that it might be later stems from the "rather late Cranach female type" and the "original conceptions in the Cranach workshop style of 1518-2" on the versos led to the later date and still later has been suggested.¹⁴⁵ It does not work. The models are statuesque and fixed, they do not live, the differences from the Bosch original arbitrary and contrary. When Bosch paints Hell, you sense 'I was there', with Cranach it is third hand and anodyne. Now, whilst it is virtually impossible to name an important painter of the times who could not be charged with some sort of intellectual borrowing, in his use of acquired material, Cranach is not Raphael, of whom Delacroix is supposed to have said: "Nowhere did he reveal his originality so forcefully as in the ideas he borrowed". But he is instructive as an entry point into late medieval practice.

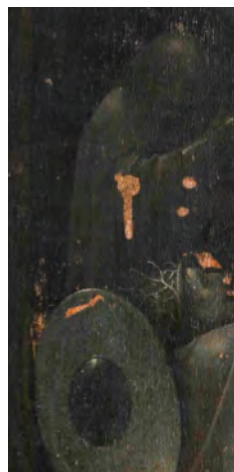
Copying raised its head in chapter 1. Suffice to add here that imitative work after Bosch was perhaps inevitable considering the celebrated nature of his monsters and their popularity, Alart Duhamel's engraving *Last Judgement* after Bosch being one of the most celebrated, and his *Besieging of an Elephant* engraving often cited as a copy of a lost Bosch composition. Apart from the copyists, the list of demonic motif derivatives, formulaic Bosch followers, and folkloric Bosch genre extensions includes Jan Provoost, Quinten Massys, Jan van Hemessen, Jan Mandijn, Pieter Huys, Hieronymus Cock prints, Herri met de Bles, the Verbeeckes, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, even Jan Brueghel, and finally the paysage moralisé of Joachim Patinir, of whom more in chapter 8.



74 Jheronimus Bosch *The Last Judgement* Munich, Alte Pinakothek



75, 76 Jheronimus Bosch
The Last Judgement
and right, a detail on the outer shutters
Christ Crowned with Thorns
Bruges, Groeningemuseum



Monsters for children reach a frontier

"We've been expecting you. Welcome to Purgatory." Joseph Roth *The Radetsky March*

COULD THE person who painted or masterminded the Vienna panels have painted the fragments we can see today in Munich?¹⁴⁶ It went unrecognised for over a century when it arrived in Nuremberg in 1817, and has been subject to various interpretations since.¹⁴⁷ Despite being identified as Bosch by Büchner in 1934 and linked (inevitably?) by him to the 1504 commission of Philip the Fair, this work has always been a problem, not least because the commission was twelve times the size of this fragment. Büchner's suggestion nevertheless persuaded others, not least De Tolnay, that it was a more likely candidate than the Vienna panels for Philip's commission. It is Bosch with a touch of Erté, the devils graced with decorative whiskers and feathery tails, sprawled delicately across an unstructured iron black ground.¹⁴⁸ "Hell, for once, has become an aesthetic delight."¹⁴⁹ It is as though some of the flourishes on the drawn studies for monsters in the Ashmolean, occasionally if dubiously attributed to Bosch, have been traced off by another hand and coloured in, and then strewn across the picture in an urgent, weightless tumult.¹⁵⁰ Monsters for children, perhaps? It is certainly not an early Bosch as the dendrochronology would suggest, stylistically it is more likely by a later follower, after 1500 and, significantly for my earlier argument, painted on old panels or new panels made from old wood, ie accidentally using the oldest or earliest segments of wood from a tree that was felled much later.¹⁵¹ The fragment languished in Nuremberg for over a century before anyone suggested it was even by Bosch.

"Artists painted what sold well... Bosch seems only to have accepted commissions in so far as he could reconcile them with his own 'ideological programme.'"¹⁵² Those demands and the lack of supply encouraged others to cash in. The Munich *Last Judgement* is one of those. It is unusual in that the figures, in Linfert's phrase, 'swim through the earth', apparently imprisoned in the element, comparable he believes to those in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* where swimming, drowning, floating, and emerging, the figures are enveloped in water. It is atypical, and hence highly unlikely to be by Bosch, in the disposition of the motifs, *die Streuung der Motive*, the figures unrelated in their casual composition.¹⁵³ Its supposed theme is curious too, in as far as it is discernible from a fragment: once again we are located somewhere in an exordium to Hell.

And nothing happens. A fragment it may be but there is no action, the naked and the dead floating around in benumbed confusion, deprived of any physical or emotional feeling. There are no prototypes for Bosch and hence it would be wrong to dismiss something because it is different, yet the "physical tortures here replaced by a portrayal of the pangs of remorse of the resurrected; the mighty and the lowly of this world [hiding] their faces in a gesture of despair or [imploring] the Judge for mercy with looks full of terror" appears rather like special pleading for a dubious picture.¹⁵⁴ As does the belief that they "are the reflection of the just-awakened terror of the risen dead, the product of consciences suddenly aware that there is no way out, no hiding place".¹⁵⁵ However, the observation that "before then Bosch had painted the tangled maze of error and persecution" and that here "the two worlds meet, that of the ultimate destroyers and that of those who finally lose hope" does point to recognition of the possibility that the final direction of the soul's journey is yet to be determined.¹⁵⁶ It may be that we are faced with the desperate remorse of the resurrected but it is more likely to be the terrified expressions of beggars desperate for mercy at the last. Calling this picture the *Last Judgement* is at best casual, if not to say whimsical. It is set, if it has a location at all, on the frontier between death at world's end and the life that begins with eternity. It is not Hell; "At most it is no more than the prelude to Hell".¹⁵⁷

The triptych in Bruges, however, is signed, has a continuous landscape across the opened panels, resembles elements of the Vienna *Last Judgement*, the *Haywain*, and the *Garden of Earthly*

Delights, the panels overflowing with demonic inventions, and witches abound, all facts that have tempted many to ascribe it to Bosch.¹⁵⁸ But we are still faced with the double image of Hell on earth, and earth as Hell, the one absorbed and integrated into the other in one last gasp of God's Creation.¹⁵⁹ Is it really a Last Judgement?

The earthly paradise with its tented barge in the foreground of the opened left hand panel is an unusual feature, made more so because it is sailing to the left, away from the action at the heart of the composition. It has always been generally seen as a workshop and not a signature piece – despite the signature. Dendrochronological tests date it 1480-86.¹⁶⁰ In 1937 De Tolnay thought it was a copy but by 1965 decided it was authentic Bosch. It has taken me rather longer to reconcile myself to the same conclusion.

Here, Christ sits on a rainbow above a globe, blessing with his right hand, condemning with his left, and the world is dominated by punishments but once again, the traditional resurrection of the dead is missing. Lust and violence are in full sway, the hellish settings are familiar, the torture machines are working overtime, their similarity with the Vienna *Last Judgement* and the *Garden of Earthly Delights* together with elements from *The Haywain* and *St Antony Triptych* one reason in particular why some see it as a workshop derived pastiche rather than a part of the main opus. *The Earthly Paradise* on the left, where souls that have finally been saved are gathering, look very similar to other Bosch paintings albeit the figures are rather smaller in these familiar surroundings than we might expect. If the right hand *Hell* panel is questionable as to its origination, this left hand *Paradise* is not. What is atypical about it is how close the composition is to a conventional *Last Judgement*, not something we have come to expect of Bosch. Typologically it works. The fact that it is still incomplete in terms of symbolism is one reason to believe in it now. It is all very real, the devils are believable, the sexual interaction with witches, the persecution and tortures, the vision of general sinfulness and depravity that Bosch views humanity sinking under, all stemming from Original Sin, leading to interminable sin, guilt and fear and a final judgement that amounts to almost universal perpetual punishment apart from the few, the very lucky few, being born aloft into Heaven by angels, as in Dante ultimate grace manifesting itself through a series of planetary spheres. This is late-medieval Bosch. Those that would challenge the hypothesis as to its authenticity should look again at the quality of the very badly damaged grisaille *Crowning with Thorns* on the outer shutters. Those that would cast this work off as pastiche, a posthumous work by an imitator, an outright forgery or a workshop rendition, may then consider that they just might be in the presence of a work largely executed by Bosch himself.

Some of the characters at the foot of the central panel appear less integrated than the best work of Bosch, their setting poorly conceived, more like a sheet of illustrations. The architectonic piece is similar to other conceptions but here is set down rather carelessly in the garden. The heavy retouching and generally poor quality of the inside right hand panel cause everyone to question it, as to a lesser extent have the changes, second thoughts and reworkings evident on the Vienna *Last Judgement* together with some of the flat surfaces on that triptych's left wing. But then is Vienna an original, a replica of an earlier Bosch by Bosch himself, or perhaps a copy by his studio? The permutations are endless and debateable. The Bruges signature is interesting in that it is more discreet than some, is a tactful black on brown, may well have darkened with age, and there are no shadow highlights.

Scientific exploration of the left hand panel in Bruges has shown that the underdrawing was of a different concept: not a paradise stopover on the way to Heaven but a Fall of the Rebel Angels, plus a Creation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve introducing a standard sin/guilt/fear tripartite work, and comparable to the great triptychs we accept as genuine – and the same as the formula followed by the work now in Vienna.¹⁶¹ The underdrawing is confident and sure so why change it, why the overpainting? It may well be that the concept was Bosch and some of the

execution by the atelier. Reconsidering the work other questions arise as they do with so many paintings by Bosch: sitting alone in his circle of light just what is Christ signifying, in Heaven why has God been both changed and overpainted, what might we now think about the fact that it was at one time exhibited as a diptych with the two side panels adjacent beside the central panel, and what might lie behind the number of apostles present and their unbalanced grouping?

The World before and after The Flood

"No more water, the fire next time!" James Baldwin¹⁶²

THE TERRORS of apocalyptic anxiety, again missing the main subject, are usually put forward as to what the damaged wings in Rotterdam once contained.¹⁶³ A little remarkably, "Noe, when he was five hundred years old, begot Sem, Cham, and Japheth. And after that man began to be multiplied upon the earth, and daughters were born to them" after which it was only a matter of time before "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them" going on to instruct Noah to build an ark 300 by 50 by 30 cubits because "Behold I will bring the waters of a great flood upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, under heaven".¹⁶⁴

Taken, however, with one of the most pervasive End Time scenarios of the age, the deluge of biblical proportions first predicted by Johannes Stöffler and Jacob Pflaum in 1499 was only the first of several astrologers who found The End in a conjunction of five planets occurring in Pisces in February 1524 combined with a full moon, a lunar eclipse and, in the southern hemisphere, a total eclipse of the sun. In a year that was, as it turned out, distinguished by drought, across Europe the devout set about building boats.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in the early years of the new century this prediction caught hold and as the subject for a devotional set of panels it is a possibility. The heavens were certainly unsettled, and heavenly signs certainly mattered. In 1504 Copernicus' planetary observations noted the Great Conjunction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Cancer, and the lunar eclipse of 2 June 1509.¹⁶⁶

Hovering somewhere between the two extremes of the Fall of the Rebel Angels and the Apocalypse, the left hand panel should inaugurate the journey in faith of a pious beholder across the painting, but here it is unclear. This does not appear to be *Hell* as the panel is customarily referred to. The sons of God and the daughters of men, the decadent Nephilim of the Hebrew Bible, seen here shortly before the deluge would also appear to be a more likely reading than the fall of apostate angels, when compared to their treatment in both the Vienna *Last Judgement*, and *The Haywain*.¹⁶⁷ The fact that both sides of the panels are monochromatic is strange and unexplained. But if grisaille can be associated with the deluge that God in his anger wrought upon the earth then perhaps the destruction of colour is a visual metaphor for that. Perhaps.¹⁶⁸ The overall coherence of the panels has not been explained either, however the possibilities range from a pair of wings painted by Bosch to accompany a central section painted or perhaps carved by someone else, to a *Last Judgement* triptych, one focused on the Flood itself, or even one inspired by Matthew's Gospel "as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" that may then help with detecting the significance of the four images within the roundels.¹⁶⁹ A pair of souls attacked by demons above a pair of souls finding solace in Christ, an expulsion of demons above a peasant and the Devil with a soul tormented by demons above the homecoming of the soul to reconciliation with Christ, they are all after the Flood.

In spite of the range of guesswork with regards the provenance of the narratives



77, 78 Jheronimus Bosch *The Flood* (front and back) and *Hell* (front and back) Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen



79 Possible arrangement of a triptych: the closed side shutters and the opened arrangement with central panel missing



80 Jheronimus Bosch *St John the Baptist* Madrid, Fundación Lázaro Galdiano



81, 82 Jheronimus Bosch *St John on Patmos* with *Passion scenes* on reverse Berlin, Staatlichen Museen



depicted, the sequence at least ends on a positive note, salvation in Christ is at hand. Nevertheless, these pictures are unlikely framing devices for a missing Last Judgement by Bosch or someone else.

However, if the *Child with Walker and Whirligig* in Vienna is considered to be either the outer wing of a triptych or one side of a 'reversible panel for use in meditation', and the *Stations of the Cross* or *Scenes from the Passion* on the reverse of St John the Evangelist on Patmos is arguably the right wing of a triptych or a two-fold altarpiece, one should ask why the roundel images of torment, with ordinary people in mortal combat with demons on the reverse of *The World before the Flood* and *The Flood*, might not also be the outside of the doors to a triptych rather than, as more often thought, the inside.¹⁷⁰ Not merely saints versus evil, here it is Everyman against the Devil, signifying the all-embracing, all-inclusive, all-pervasive nature of the fight, and suitable for the pious to compose themselves spiritually prior to their inner contemplation. As a portal into the transcendent world these roundels would be fitting preparation.

To then open up on to a vision of Hell on Earth and Noah's Ark balanced precariously on top of Mount Ararat framing an apocalyptic scene of Doomsday-by-Flood is conceivable if we consider the relationship of the painting to *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the central panel of which has been seen by some as a moment before the Flood that punished the ungodliness and wickedness of mankind. In the context of Bosch's more obviously moralising eschatological Hell scenes these images fit in with what is generally considered to be the later work of the artist.¹⁷¹

According to some versions of Genesis eight were spared, Bosch shows eight in the boat. They are surrounded by a landscape of dead exotic creatures, the horror of Genesis set out for pious contemplation.¹⁷² In an Augustinian world where Noah was recognised as an instrument of God, and the ark represented the Church, the consequences of sin and evil were clear for everyone to see. The wickedness of Noah's time was seen as a precursor of the final days, divine judgement by deluge presaging future devastation by fire.¹⁷³ Whether the assumed inside left panel of the world before the Flood could be the fire of judgement on an apocalyptic earth from Revelations on an outer panel is doubtful. The end of time is unlikely to have been positioned on the left of a standard left to right reading, and there is none of the "hail and fire", no "great mountain burning with fire", none of the multitudes we expect hiding in "the dens and rocks of mountains" instead of which we confront a land of demons, and the destruction by fire is in a roundel on the reverse.¹⁷⁴ Even allowing for licence and interpretation, for one so scripturally literal in so many of his pictures, this is not 'the fire of Judgement'. Neither could it possibly be the Fall of the Rebel Angels leading into an unspoiled Paradise.¹⁷⁵ This is Hell on earth, a city burns in a landscape setting, and the demons relate in part to the Hell on earth of the Lisbon *St Antony*.

*“Ist dies etwa der Tod?”*¹⁷⁶

“After the first death, there is no other” Dylan Thomas¹⁷⁷

WHAT IS it like to die? With *Visions of the Hereafter* we are lost forever on the verge of perpetuity.¹⁷⁸ The panels have raised questions as to how Bosch conceived the final panel, *Ascent of the Blessed*, one of the few panels in the set offering any sense of hope as souls in the company of angels rise higher and farther from the earth into a cone of light tunnelling towards their destination in the empyrean in Heaven. This visualisation equates to descriptions recorded by those nearing death. Just as Bosch addressed the complex problem of painting the origins of life he produced an image of what happens when life comes to an end.¹⁷⁹

Dante wrote about seeing the light of God far, far away, Bosch painted it and those that have had a ‘near death experience’ reported it. ‘Near-death experience’ is something to approach with extreme scepticism along with ‘out-of-body’ perception, hypnotic regression, reincarnation, astrology, spiritualism, psychic powers, the drug-induced rushing, roaring tunnels through which one flies to the light, the bizarre and the barmy. However, interpretations of such experience ranging from a glimpse of the life beyond to the product of hallucinations, imaginings and mental constructions of a dying brain, probably tell us more about ourselves and fear or acceptance of death than the journey of the soul freed from earthly ties beyond the limitations of space and time. Popularity of a theory is not proof, neither is compelling personal experience. Near death experience may have changed lives forever, but is not evidence of life after death. Change in itself is no evidence of spiritual transformation.¹⁸⁰

But near-death means one does not die. It is not proof of eternal life, nevertheless the idea of blissful transcendence at death is powerful. But undoubtedly, the visually arresting *Ascent* with its image of souls greeted by a winged figure as they emerge from a tunnel of light does evoke experiences related by people who have awoken from a coma, it has also been related to the regressive dreams of those that relive the act of being born, and also gave rise to some of the wilder Gnostic interpretations of the artist. Less contentiously, that fissure of light leading to a glowing Heavenly Paradise, its luminous magnetic pull towards which the blessed rise, demonstrates the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*, and in particular the text of *The Spiritual Espousals*.¹⁸¹

Picturing life at the limit may tell us more about the artist and his times than about death. Taken with the friction between light and dark, the flash of Heavenly light and the dense dark depths of Hell into which demons draw the damned, between refined cruelty and ecstatic happiness, the rich scratchy brushwork, the vivid tonal orchestration that forms unexpected contrasts, and the freedom of the spatial organisation of these panels, taken all together with the perplexing set of references to the wisdom books of the Old Testament that replaced the narrative allegorical structure of earlier works, have led to their dating c1500. It all augurs the future *Garden of Earthly Delights* and *Tribulation of St Antony*. What is missing from the *Visions of the Hereafter* is a central panel, generally assumed to be a *Last Judgement*.¹⁸²

There remains the question of the order of these panels and whether it is a *Last Judgement* that is missing. Was the *Ascent of the Blessed* the final panel? When rehung in Venice in 2011 they were displayed as *Fall of the Damned*, and *Hell*, space, *Earthly Paradise*, and *Ascent of the Blessed* – the far right and final panel. *The Earthly Paradise* was placed on the left because it resembles other Eden panels by Bosch, especially the landscape and fountain, and follows biblical convention. But, as Silver notes, “with its gathering of nude souls, accompanied by angels and looking upward toward the fountain, this earthly paradise seems to be a culmination of lives, not a primordial setting”, pious souls being led to “another verdant *earthly* realm” [my italics].¹⁸³

Christians were not entirely clear where Heaven was, and the distinction between Heaven and Paradise was also unclear. They were certainly just as uncertain about locating Purgatory. De Bruyn takes issue with Marijnissen over the question of the title of the *Earthly*

Paradise panel due to his being unaware of the medieval view that it “functioned as a waiting room for the souls before they could enter Heaven”.

De Tolnay saw the panels hung with the *Ascent* above the *Earthly Paradise*, and the *Fall of the Damned* above *Hell*. This idea was later endorsed by Baldass on the questionable basis of a diagonal red/dark green colour arrangement of the reverse of the panels. Silver concurs with the Venice rehang as, for example, did Reuterswärd, while Marijnissen orders the panels in the complete reverse: *Ascent*, *Paradise*, *Hell*, and the *Fall*, and notes that various authors have ordered them according to colour, suggest they may be part of entirely separate ensembles, and that an alternative potential centrepiece was the *Resurrection of the Dead*.¹⁸⁴ His ordering is based on the traditional iconography of God directing the damned to Hell on his left from Matthew 25: 32-3.¹⁸⁵ In Vandenbroeck's essay the panels are ordered differently again: *Paradise*, *Ascent*, *Hell* and the *Fall*.¹⁸⁶ Chailley suggested they were not one ensemble but a pair of diptychs.¹⁸⁷ Fraenger ignored them!

Whilst some have referred to Bouts as a source, if not *the* source material for Bosch, due to its image of souls rising to Heaven through a circular break in the clouds, the *Devotio Moderna* and Ruysbroeck's writing about the Last Judgement that includes the passage, “The good shall appear in a great light” together with many other references linking blinding light and God, are far more convincing associations with Bosch, along with Dante, despite questions as to the Tuscan's availability in Brabant at the end of the 15th century. Just as Walter Benjamin wrote of a translator's task being “to liberate the language imprisoned in a work” so an artist may seek to illuminate a text by attempting to storm the literary fortress that is *The Divine Comedy*, the perfect translation of which remains one of literature's holiest grails. And again, as with a painter, Dante's talent for compression may be considered apt for artistic interpretation by way of visual metaphor, trusting to the writer's power of suggestion and belief in his audience's ability to take a hint. The poem may seem labyrinthine, so these paintings, vivid as they are, may be difficult to untangle; but they do address questions of inner life and faith concerned with both the secular world and celestial fantasies. And for once in Bosch, whilst one is regularly told how evil is more interesting than goodness, seeing those blessed few rise to the empyrean is an expression of resurrection's value to both body and soul, and visual communication at its most vibrantly alive. In the Dantesque dark world that we call our lives, this funnel of goodness and light is a source of variety and surprise capturing the visionary and ecstatic union with God.

Visions, mystical experience, spiritual emergency, and ekphrasis

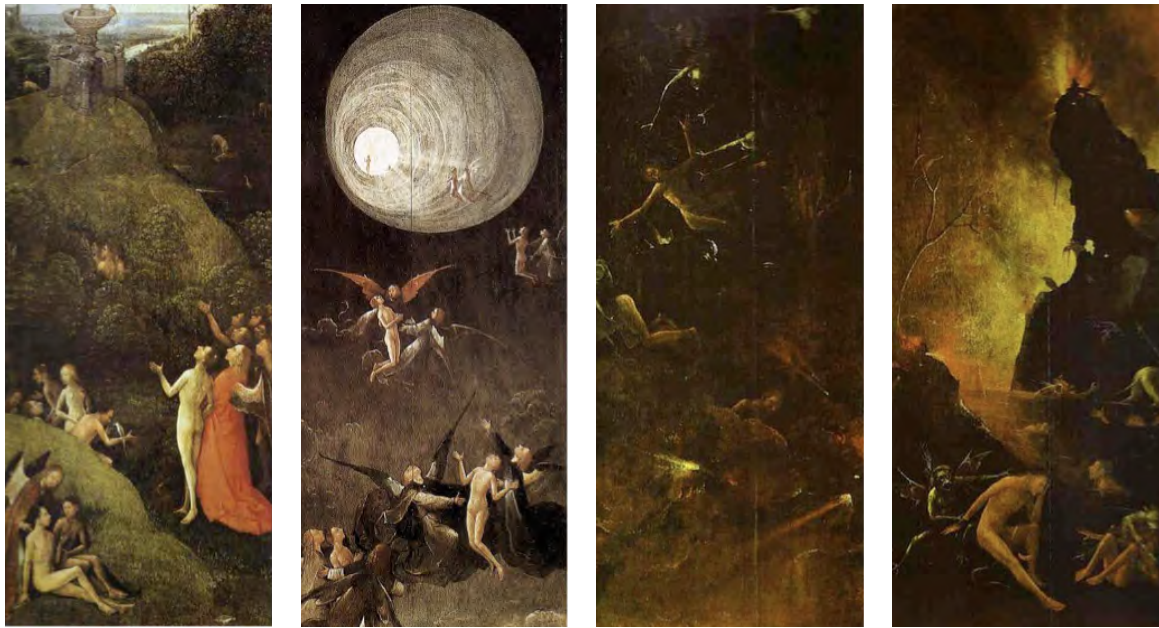
“The treasure which the hero fetches from the dark cavern is life: it is himself”

C G Jung *Symbols of Transformation*

“Try inserting an account of a mystical experience into a conversation, and you'll likely get the same response as you would if you confided that you had been the victim of an alien abduction”

Barbara Ehrenreich¹⁸⁸

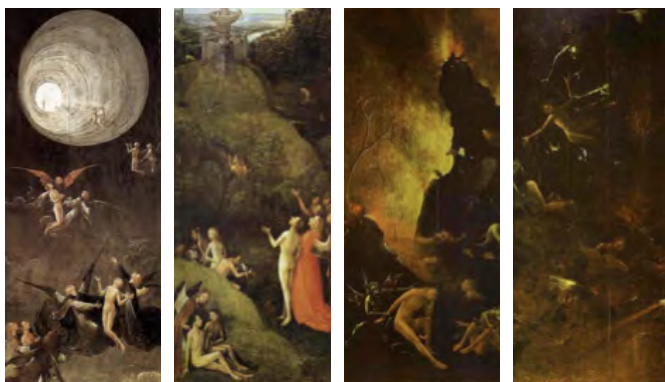
MERCANTONIO MICHIEL reported seeing a ‘canvas with Dreams’ in 1521, one of three works in the collection of Cardinal Domenico Grimani. Gibson considered that Michiel had seen the *Hell* panel from the *Visions of the Hereafter* and that the diarist had “misinterpreted the remorseful soul as a sleeping man whose troubled dreams have generated the monstrous forms around him” in the “tradition that linked Bosch's imagery with dreams” – something he saw continuing the association begun with Cock's engraved *Effigies*, the Latin verses of Lampsonius, Lomazzo's references to “extraordinary and horrible dreams” that were “unique and truly divine” together with Vasari's references to Frans Mostaert's “fantasies, bizarre things, dreams and imaginings”



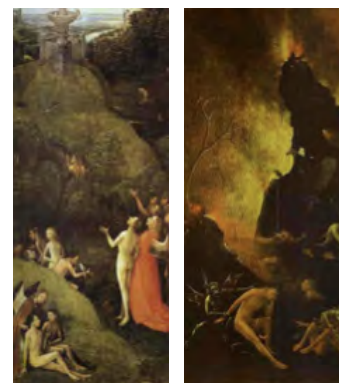
83, 84, 85 86 Jheronimus Bosch *Visions of the Hereafter – Earthly Paradise/Ascent of the Blessed/Fall of the Damned/Hell* Venice, Palazzo Grimani



87 Possible alternative arrangement



88 Third possible arrangement



89 Fourth possible arrangement

emanating from his early career as a Bosch imitator or simply by confusing the work of one artist with another.¹⁸⁹ Gibson does not question whether the Hell seen by Michiel is the panel we can see today but he does raise the issue of medieval belief in the power of dreams and Bosch's demonic art being "interpreted as a product of actual dreams" with reference to 'dream books' of the period.¹⁹⁰ He leaves us with the open-ended question of whether the art was construed as the product of nightmares, "apparitions of a mind whose reason is in abeyance, suppressed in sleep" in which "Bosch's terrifying evocations of the eternal night of the damned were transformed into the stuff of dreams" or were considered real. Which in the context of Bosch and his times brings to mind the comment attributed to Avigdor Pawsner, "If you are looking for hell ask the artist where it is. If you cannot find the artist, you are already in hell."

After Michiel, the critic Marco Boschini wrote of seeing 15 small panels with monsters, dreams and visions in 1664 in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice.¹⁹¹ More recently, Massing discerned deceptive delusions conjured by the devil to corrupt Antony in the Lisbon triptych, a theory supported by medieval psychology and set out in *Malleus Maleficarum*.¹⁹² Human nature, it would seem, was motivated to put dreams into reality and faith played its part in their accomplishment. Heavenly space could be experienced within one's own mind through imagined journeys as part of religious ritual with one's memory of such experiences the source material for art.¹⁹³

Journeys of the mind can, however, get out of hand. Spiritual awakenings of a dangerous magnitude were claimed by Denys the Carthusian to have inspired his mystical writings. His divine ecstasies were the result of a gradual awareness that built up to the point of becoming physically dangerous. It was what Stanislaw Grof in the 20th century called a spiritual emergency, a phrase that describes a spiritual awakening of extreme intensity. In effect, an emergence becomes an emergency. Some people have visions when they experience a spiritual emergency. The emergency can be prolonged and painful but it often leads to a deeper commitment. The irony is that a spiritual emergency may well arise from an awareness of needing, in the words of St Richard of Chichester, "to know God more clearly, follow Him more nearly and love Him more dearly". And yet often during an emergency, God seems further away than ever. Denys claimed he encountered souls languishing in Purgatory. Joan of Arc is considered to have had such passionate feelings which it drove her to wild ecstasies when she heard the voice of God that certainly changed her life. The chaplain in *Catch 22* goes through an emergency, his mind in a shambles as he is plagued by visions and his faith undermined to the extent that he fears for his sanity. The spiritual Jacob's Ladder celebrates the vision of Jacob climbing a ladder that reaches up to Heaven where he had no doubt it was the Lord standing at the top.



90 A reconstructed *Last Judgement* with Alart Duhamel's engraving centre, supposedly based on a lost painting by Bosch.

There is a clear distinction between a mystical experience and a spiritual emergency. A mystical experience is a sense of bliss and connection, 'oneness' and 'spaciousness' are words that have been used to describe the experience whereas in a spiritual emergency, apparently tortured by doubt, all the unresolved psychological material wells up inside the sufferer to the extent that it can be so terrifying as to induce a sense that one is going to die. Today medical treatment can suppress the torture but 500 years ago there was nowhere to hide.

William Blake once wrote "the tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction". Perhaps the tigers were the visions he saw during his spiritual emergencies which inspired his poetry and art, and maybe the horses were the learning he received from his books and his teachers. But Blake's descriptions of his visions were so disturbing that the first biography of him was called *Blake: Mad or Not Mad?* And yet now, how many people believe that incidents buried in their subconscious are peopled by Boschian imagery? That is the power of the artist. Interest in the mystical writings of Denys van Leeuwen and the concept of an earthly and heavenly paradise may well have been, in part, the inspiration for both Bouts and Bosch.

The sibling relationship between art and writing has been acknowledged ever since there has been art criticism. Horace referred to a written text that aspired to the condition of a picture, in that it represents the representation. It is itself representational. It dismantles the image by use of language with visual properties; word art. *Ekphrasis* is a term of classical rhetoric for this pairing of words and pictures, a state of imitation once referred to as 'mimesis of mimesis', a play on a Greek word that appropriately, according to John Hollander, comes from the age of Bruegel. This literary word painting, such as Auden's *Musée des Beaux-Arts*, his observations on Icarus falling from the sky in Brussels, or in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, where a description of Holbein's *Christ Taken from the Cross* is both a frightening portent and symbolic, the sustained integration of painted image and written text. William Carlos Williams is a name commonly associated with Bruegel, because he wrote so many poems inspired by the painter. Concentrating on content, he spells it out, which is the essence of ekphrasis – "telling in full".¹⁹⁴ But in fact the term has become used far more liberally, from the title of a picture to a full narrative of the content, from art criticism to prosopopoeia – a figure of speech.¹⁹⁵ "All by themselves, then, picture titles can express precisely what ekphrasis so often delivers: a radical critique of representation."¹⁹⁶ Thus we have definitions that are both too broad and too tight. Nevertheless, as audiences respond and participate, one may think of Jung.

Jung was fascinated by Bosch because he was fascinated by the dark side of God. The emotional and theoretical struggle with the nature of the deity was evident in Jung's earliest fantasies and dreams. When he wrote of Job that "the dark side of God" had "given him the power to empty out the apocalyptic vials of wrath on his fellow creatures" his dire warnings and the drive with which he delivers make clear that God was alive to him. As he was to Bosch.

Audiences do, however, have communal responses, drawn from the camaraderie that is the battle of life, responses that are unpredictable by the artist. They can be very strong, even violent because they are self-reinforcing. These epiphanies are not isolated events. This idea differs from Jung's idea of collective unconscious – that "storehouse of latent memory traces inherited from man's ancestral past", a universal idea that linked Darwin's theory of evolution to ancient mythology, and determined personality and ego.¹⁹⁷ As the son of a Protestant minister Jung nevertheless left room for Christianity despite considering communion as "the absence of God... It is not life which is there, but death" he wrote,¹⁹⁸ something of relevance to his appreciation of Bosch.¹⁹⁹ In 1927 JW Dunne wrote a book called *An Experiment With Time*. In it he wrote of dreams which draw their symbols from the future as well as the past. Is it possible that an artist could do the same since so much of their work comes from the same source as dreams?

Zola wrote of imprisoned miners dying of poisoned air drawing something from a 'memory of his own death', smothered with fumes. If Jung is to be believed we share our dreams.

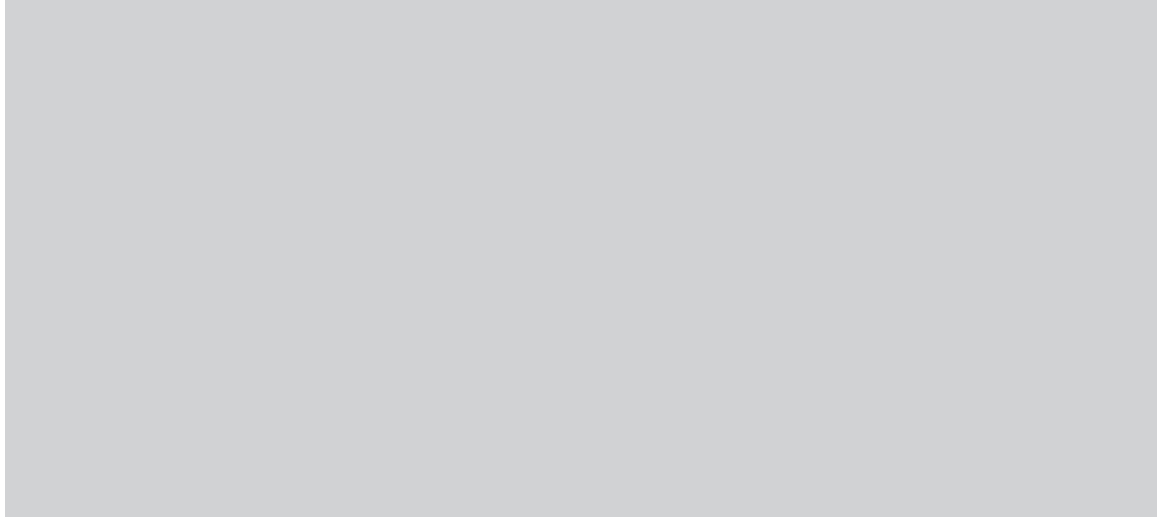
Entr'acte **Anselm Kiefer** confronting history, Heaven and Earth²⁰⁰

"The great epoch of the spiritual which is already beginning . . . provides and will provide the soil in which a kind of monumental art must come to fruition" Wassily Kandinsky²⁰¹

BEUYS, BASELITZ, RICHTER AND KIEFER. What a line-up, a back four to be proud of. They have little to do with each other except that they are all from Germany and Kiefer was for a while a student of Beuys, the great shaman of German art and elder statesman of the avant-garde, whose view was that history, mythology, religion and art formed a matrix. The intellectual wealth of their ideas can render the reading of their work ambiguous and difficult, nevertheless, they have all been unafraid to confront life's big issues. They are nothing if not controversial. They have all confronted history to shake up their complacent countrymen. That may be a tough terrain but they have drawn us a map with which to navigate it. And they have all worked with grand themes of myth, mysticism and nature that at times uncomfortably recall Nazi motifs. The personal was always political.

Anselm Kiefer is a deeply serious artist, about as serious as we get these days. In 2004 he created a site-specific work for a new museum in the north of Milan located in a former Pirelli factory, Hangar Bicocca.²⁰² *The Seven Heavenly Palaces*, seven tottering, monumental concrete towers "symbolising the mystical experience of ascension through the seven levels of spirituality".²⁰³ Typical of the grandeur of his symbolic vision, the work stirs religion, literature, myth and history into a mixture of cultural references and artistic techniques melding painting with collage and sculpture that he serves up as forcefully as any artist alive. He is a history artist on a grand scale who has been misinterpreted since the famous photo of him giving a Nazi salute to the Mediterranean taken in 1969 when he was 24.²⁰⁴ Obsessively focused on a war he did not witness, and a ruined national culture to which he was heir, Kiefer's early work swung between extremes of dream and nightmare, "blending German Romanticism, utopian mysticism and evocations of the Holocaust" demonstrating "nostalgia for a past and rejection of that past; hunger for power and distrust of power; longing for spiritual transcendence and disbelief in its possibility".²⁰⁵ He has become a disturbing messenger as we are confronted constantly by themes of destruction and rebirth, glory and shame, sin and redemption. Nowhere is art's return to history and landscape more spectacular than in the work of Anselm Kiefer: the result a vision of an ash-strewn, desiccated wasteland. Kiefer exploits history for his art, his horizon the horizon of memory.²⁰⁶ It is art as atonement – "not as a source of redemption but as an unavoidable truth – a burden to be acknowledged and carried".²⁰⁷ "Kiefer's road to Heaven, informed by an awareness of history, is paved with a scepticism that is turned as much against scientific certitude as it is against theological authority. He does not assume the existence of paradise, only the ancient need to imagine one."²⁰⁸ *Himmel-Erde* at the Museo Correr in Venice in 1997, immense landscapes and interiors that evoked Germany's past, was the first time I encountered his work.²⁰⁹ Railroad tracks ominously leading into woods, star-filled skies, the universe as immense athanar, an alchemical oven, dense, coagulated paintings, grand, narrative structures that came straight out of a 19th century romantic tradition.²¹⁰ I found myself looking at one long challenge to those Germans "who tried to forget". The paintings had become panoramic. The sculptures now reached for the sky. After Monumenta 2007, *Chute d'étoiles* at the Grand Palais in Paris, in 2009 *Am Anfang* combined art with music to create an 'abstract drama' at the Opéra Bastille as Kiefer, working with Jörg Widmann, portrayed a theatre of miseries, a spectacle of grim emptiness and desolation. A letter that appears in the book accompanying the work stated "everything has already occurred at the beginning, because the beginning is the end". According to Kiefer, the end is the beginning and in the beginning is also the end. *In the beginning (Am Anfang)* feels like the end of the world. Set in the cradle of civilisation, the fertile crescent that arcs from north Africa to Persia, he collides Baghdad with Berlin, the Jewish diaspora of 600BC with the rubble women, the *Trümmerfrauen*

who scraped a life from the debris in 1945,²¹¹ the desert of the Bible lands with the desert of post-war Germany and the desolate ruins of the blasted landscape that is Iraq today.



91 Anselm Kiefer *Dat rosa miel apibus* 2101-11 oil, acrylic, terracotta, salt, lead and resin on canvas 330x1710cm
© Anselm Kiefer. Photo: Ben Westoby. Courtesy White Cube

The key biblical quotation for Kiefer in this work is from Isaiah 21:4 in the King James Bible "My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me. The night of my pleasure hath He turned into fear unto me".²¹² The theme is the ultimate vindication of divine providence in relation to the existence of evil, a theodicy based on the belief that out of evil – God will bring good. Latent in all the work of Bosch is the same theological attempt to defend God's goodness in the face of the existence of evil.²¹³

The evil and brutality of the 20th century posed the problem for artists of how to confront the inexpressible, to show the un-representable, and ask the ultimate question 'how can I be a (German) artist after Auschwitz?'²¹⁴ Kiefer's response has been to produce *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a synthesis of visual art, music and literature in a continuous quest for identity. His work is one where everything is connected, everything has meaning. In his own words "art is what makes it possible to survive the illusions of life." The emotional power of the work is unflinching, the scale overwhelming, the vision apprehensive, the commitment total, and my overall response is simply to be deeply moved. Combining theatricality with moral instruction, like Bosch, Kiefer, the history artist, is there to remind us of our failings.²¹⁵



92 Anselm Kiefer *Böhmen liegt am Meer* 1995 oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac on burlap 190x559cm
Baden-Baden, Museum Frieder Burda. © Anselm Kiefer

Faith, fear and instability

"Out of reality are our tales of imagination fashioned" Hans Andersen

HELL TODAY IS SHUT UP and empty. We have no further use for it. The devil is a king without a kingdom. He is no doubt putting up in various hotels we could all identify. If you ask a representative collection of bishops for their views on Hell, you will be greeted with looks of embarrassment, as though you had brought up a somewhat discreditable incident in their church's past. Hell, they might tell you vaguely, is the unsatisfactory state of those who have rejected the love of God. It may be an entirely open prison where devout warders gaze in pity at the inmates and impose no sort of punishment. The ghastly pit of torment, reeking with a foul stench and reverberating with the incessant hammering of devils and the screams of those eternally tortured has outlived its usefulness, and if the world is no better – it does not seem to be much the worse for its removal. Hell is no longer there to terrorise us. The nature of God has changed. He no longer finds it entertaining to condemn us to an eternity of suppurating sores, with our bones rotting and eyes dropping out. "The sodomitic was clasped by the man-of-arms, the executioner was stuck into the nun, the nobleman was touched up by the vagabond and the reader of prohibited books was seduced by the rapist of animals."²¹⁶

History may be independent of theology but theology cannot be independent of history. By the time of Bosch the personification of evil spirits had already travelled from the Jewish Devil that had been developed in the New Testament, its fifth century elaboration as Satan in the time of St Augustine, and the medieval transformation into Lucifer.²¹⁷ Even before the time of Bosch, the image of Hell had developed into a grotesque parody of divine judgement, sinners festering and suffering in pits of excrement. The Old Testament God of battles smiting his enemies with satisfaction was not always attractive but was far less unpleasant than the God presiding over a baroque Hell. And for those who indulged in a lifetime of discomfort by lashing themselves, wearing a crucifix with a nail stuck into their chests, slept naked in a freezing room or suspended themselves for hours with their arms fixed to a ceiling by ropes – Hell may have been preferable.

For Bosch, however, Hell was only too real, painting was a vocation, a way of following the Lord, his work an example of what John's Gospel describes as the gift of Christ, "Life in all its fullness". If as Picasso thought, God is really only another artist,²¹⁸ then Bosch must have seen himself as a *confrère* as he set out on his journey in Christ.²¹⁹

Movement across a triptych implies a point of departure and a destination. Bosch extended the narrative by beginning the story on the closed shutters. He would then embark on his long-distance journey through world history with three transit points: a gateway to experience, a central panel that acts as the hub, and a final departure lounge from this world and entry into the next. By unifying the open panels he constructed an uninterrupted transition from one scene to the next. By implication, there are no stopovers in this life. As we travel inexorably forward, every act merges into one complete picture of our lives upon which we will be judged. The triptychs stand as accusations against the behaviour of mankind in this world, and focus on the ultimate penalty for indulgence in earthly pleasures and turning away from God. Set within a religious framework, sin and evil are the constant themes, with morality or the lack of it, determining our final destination as salvation or Hell in the afterlife.

Bosch usurped the conventions of the triptych format to exploit it to the full by unifying the panels into a seamless image, from the tradition of a primary central picture with two complementary panels at the sides; by extending the storyline to the closed triptych, from the standard pattern of making any external imagery subordinate; and by including the secular

realm in what had hitherto been an exclusively religious domain.²²⁰ The structure contributed to the meaning. In religion a traditionalist, Bosch was artistically unconventional to the point at which he “deliberately inverted or subverted the traditions of the format”.²²¹ His independence may have led him to even make use of the format for reasons of his own as opposed to a patron’s brief, nevertheless by his actions he certainly injected new life into a dying art form, its symbolic structure given a deeper meaning.²²²

We all think we know what evil means, and many believe that as mankind becomes more reasonable there will progressively be less evil in the world. These same people might look at a painting by Bosch and find it hard to resist the idea that he actually admired evil, mankind in its garden enjoying the unequivocal triumph of evil over good, the artist would perhaps like us to rejoice in it too. They may live on the basis that right and wrong, good and evil, have little meaning any more and thus envy the carefree amorality set before them, in a display of indifference to rectitude as something they too have set aside as a matter of self-interest, evil for them being simply an error, or a product of ignorance, or maybe a lack of understanding. And they may be thinking that religion can be dropped like belief in fairies, morality continuing much as it did in the past.

Some of the onlookers will nevertheless find that rather disturbing, even today. A world without evil might well be a better place, but giving up on the moral outlook inherited from religion would certainly be very different to the world we have inherited. What they see as they look at these paintings may be hemmed in by habit and convention, but they may well understand more easily the artist’s drive for human fulfilment as he struggled to make those around him understand their predicament as he saw it, and appreciate the need for change in their lives. Whilst exploring a visionary world beyond the one revealed by our senses, the supernatural that were believed to stalk the earth during his lifetime, Bosch viewed a world unseen by his contemporaries and painted to remind his audience that, struggle as they may to change things around them, another kind of change was possible, an inner change, through which they might enter a richer and more glorious life in the world beyond. His painted vistas of the unknown were revelations of another dimension, an invisible order of things hidden behind appearances, a glimpse of a different tomorrow seen through unsealed eyes, if only the onlooker would accept the need for change. And soon. They should be as scared as he was.

Mastering a set of mental tools to equip oneself for the spiritual life was an essential part of training the religious imagination. Today the questions will be, why do people believe in God? What is our evidence? Abstract, intellectual questions, philosophical questions, posed by an intellectual elite, whereas for those that lived in the world of Bosch, we must understand their fundamentally practical questions: how to be more aware of the presence of God, how to feel God’s love. Belief was a given. In that, we might compare it to charismatic evangelicals today, for whom, as the social scientist Emile Durkheim argued in 1912, religion arose as a way for social groups to experience themselves as groups. For them, belief was the least part of it.²²³

Now, whilst in the age of Bosch, belief was the greatest part of it, nevertheless, we should see in the charismatic that seek ‘concrete experiences of God’s realness’ and the ‘hot presence of the Holy Spirit to brush their cheeks and knock them sideways’ something of the intimate relationship their church trains their minds to experience the presence of God. For them, God talks back. “Evangelical prayer is much more than mumbled grace at dinnertime” just as in the medieval world it was more than a decade of the rosary.²²⁴ They believe in a very intimate God who talks personally to them, and gained the ability to treat what the mind imagines as real, if not more so, than the world one knows.²²⁵

Certainly, evangelicals do not recognise the difference between a Last and a Particular Judgement. Questions remain as to whether the distinction between *Judicium universale* and *Judicium particulare* has been really appreciated and understood: the Last Judgement and the

Particular Judgement, the universal and the personal, the final destiny of the soul and the distinct, intermediate judgement at the moment of death. We must now move on to consider whether the *Last Judgement* that we see today in Vienna, whether it is an original, a replica or a derivative copy, is the eighth painting in a series of eight? As intriguing is another question to be addressed later: when Bruegel made a drawing of the *Last Judgement* in addition to his own series of *Seven Deadly Sins*, was he copying an idea originated with Bosch, and if so, why are the traditional elements that define the medieval last judgement so evident in Bruegel when they are missing in Bosch?²²⁶ And why two highly creative artistic innovators were both seemingly unable to leave the past.

- 1 Graham Greene *Brighton Rock* 1938. Rose talking to her thug boyfriend Pinkie, to which she adds hopefully, "Heaven too".
- 2 *Waterloo*, the Eurovision Song Contest winner 6 April 1974, written by Benny Andersson, Bjoern Ulvaeus, and Stig Anderson. There are plenty of other pop song examples, eg the Jamaican, Bob Marley "In this bright future you can't forget your past" from *No Woman, No Cry* 1974, the publishing rights of which were subject to a legal dispute in 2014.
- 3 *The Economist* 3 November 2007
- 4 The counterattack has achieved religious intensity as an avalanche of best selling books attack God, whilst religion is "the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs, guiding attitudes to political liberty and obligations, concepts of nationhood and, of course, conflicts and war". Philip Jenkins 'The Next Christianity' *The Atlantic Monthly* October 2002 p68
- 5 A bishop, a nun, a hospital, and a holy war, led the *National Catholic Reporter* to state: "Just days before Christians celebrated Christmas, Jesus got evicted". After St Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix terminated a pregnancy to save the life of a mother in December 2010, Bishop Thomas Olmsted excommunicated Sister Margaret McBride who had been on the hospital's ethics committee that approved the decision. When this failed to bully the institution into submission, the Bishop effectively excommunicated the entire hospital as he stripped it of its affiliation with the diocese. Dogma, sanctity, rules and punishment met compassion and mercy head on as a clash of values yet again signalled the level to which profound disagreements have risen. The hospital rejected the bishop's demands to change its policies and procedures and, together with the Christ-like figure in the story who had spent her life toiling for the sick and needy, attracted considerable support. As deaf and remote as the Church had been in 1517, Jamie L. Manson of the *Reporter* argued a tipping point may once again have been reached: "though they will be denied the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist, the Eucharist will rise out of St Joseph's every time the sick are healed, the frightened are comforted, the lonely are visited, the weak are fed, and vigil is kept over the dying." This was not an isolated incident, the Church apparently becoming more conservative, and the laity more impatient with its hierarchy seen as increasingly out of touch.
- 6 People are scared. Ipsos, a French polling institute, surveyed 20-25 year olds on the question of globalisation: "What does it mean to you" 48% responded 'fear'. Christophe Lambert, author of another examination of contemporary France, *The Fearful Society*, wrote that the country is "paralysed by fear of the future, fear of losing, fear of others, fear of taking a risk, fear of solitude, fear of growing old".
- 7 The biblical basis for the seven deadly sins is the Book of Proverbs where six sins are listed that anger the god Yahweh, a seventh was added later. The list that has come down the ages with Christianity does not have a great deal of overlap with this original set of six. It was in the fourth century that the ascetic, Evagrius of Pontus, writing extensively about the intersection of the Bible with the struggles of the spiritual life, produced a list of what he called evil thoughts. Over time these thoughts became seen as not just thoughts but sins, flaws and fundamental vices that were eventually contracted down to seven and later codified by the great centraliser of papal power Gregory the Great (590-604). After the fourth Lateran Council in 1215, an annual confession became mandatory for all Catholics and the seven deadly sins became embedded in the spiritual imagination. The list has continually changed over time; the original luxuria or extravagance for example changing to lust as the Church became more obsessed with sex, acedia or spiritual sloth became sadness in the 6th century and then reverted to sloth in the 17th, and covetousness changed to avarice or greed as the emphasis changed over time. As everyone became convinced of the list's validity, punishments became more specific, for example being put into freezing water for envy, broken on a wheel for pride, dismembered alive for anger, thrown into a snake pit for sloth or into a cauldron of boiling oil for greed. Contrary to the headlines, the original seven deadly sins have not been abolished. You can still do time in purgatory for pride, envy, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, lust and wrath, but in 2008 the Vatican added some new sins it saw as relevant to the modern world such as damaging the environment, drug trafficking and accumulating excessive wealth.
- 8 EM Forster *Howards End* 1910 ch 33 "Only connect!... Live in fragments no longer." It is the book's epitaph. In relation to Bosch one might add another Forsterism - "Have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time beautiful?" *A Room With a View* 1908 ch 1
- 9 St Augustine *City of God* trans Marcus Dods 1952 p14
- 10 Psalms 13:2
- 11 Gospel According to St Luke 17:21
- 12 RL Delevoy *Bosch* 1960 p87
- 13 Michiel's journal of 1521 describes 'a canvas representing dreams' in the palace of Cardinal Grimani. But as Walter Gibson notes *The Art Bulletin* 74/2 June 1992 pp205-7 the painting to which Marcantonio Michiel was probably referring, the *Fall of the Damned and Hell*, were neither on canvas nor "in the possession of Cardinal Grimani".
- 14 Reindert Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 p255
- 15 First Epistle of St John 4:18 "Fear is not in charity..." to which Challoner adds the note "Perfect charity, or love, banisheth human fear". Most other bibles, eg King James, translate this verse more directly as 'there is no fear in love'.
- 16 Epistle of St Paul to the Philippians 2:12
- 17 EH Gombrich *The Story of Art* 2006 pkt ed pp270-1
- 18 Frenchmen between 18 and 48 were conscripted for military service in August 1914. Aged 45, Matisse was rejected: "My own work is going nowhere, inspiration being obviously lacking, and I've other things on my mind" he wrote to his mother on 21 August 1914 *Archives Matisse* Paris. The smoke of Verdun nevertheless hung over his studio. His friends Derain and Apollinaire were at the front along with Vlaminck, Braque, and Flandrin. War made everything else seem trivial. The only painting he produced in September was the strange *French Window at Collioure* - bleached shutters either side of a black void, a window opening onto war that Aragon called the most mysterious picture Matisse ever painted: see Louis Aragon *Henri Matisse, roman* 1998 p303. First exhibited only in 1966, it makes perfect sense to anyone used to looking at abstract expressionism. Matisse moved to Nice in 1917. The austerity of the first paintings he produced there still echoed the war, sufficient to wipe the smile

off the faces of those who associate the artist only with vibrant, pulsating colour.

- 19 The Christian Eucharist, the Mass, *ite missa est* – ‘go, it is sent’ – is the drama that links Christ to his followers. But liturgy is never static. The Divine Office began to be set from the 5th century. St Benedict instituted the Canonical Hours. Breviaries date from the 9th century. The earliest Missal or Order of the Mass dates from the 10th. After the Lateran Council of 1215 confession and penance were made obligatory. From the 13th century the Roman Church restricted communicants to the bread, the chalice being reserved for the priest. (There was concern that the Lord’s blood might stick to the beards and moustaches of the male faithful.) It was not until 1439 that the doctrine of the seven sacraments from baptism to extreme unction was regularised. The impact of the Mass on musical history was profound. Incantation transformed the spiritual and aesthetic impact; choral and instrumental arrangements influenced Europe’s musical tradition. “The liturgical text forms the portal through which music enters into the cultural history of the Western Christian world.” Magnusson and Pálsson (1965) *The Vinland Sagas* p24 and Davies (1966) *Europe* p332. The principal challenge for medieval polyphony was arranging settings for the Ordinaries (*Kyrie Eleison, Gloria in Excelsis Deo, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei* and the dismissal – *Ite, missa est*). Guillaume de Machaut was the first to complete a Mass cycle in the 14th century and Palestrina raised liturgical music to high art in the 16th, completing *Missa Papae Marcellae* in 1555 following instructions from the Council of Trent to give maximum clarity to words.
 - 20 CS Watkins *Sin, Penance and Purgatory, Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories* Past & Present Society vol 1, 2002 pp3-33.
 - 21 Those who died in venial sin went to Purgatory and were punished there for a time before being released with purified souls into Heaven. Limbo was reserved for the souls of those who merited Heaven but had never received the grace of baptism. The medieval practice was to make Limbo a part of Hell. Dante saw Limbo full of the heroes and poets of classical antiquity, a noble place, a bubble of light enclosed by the murk of a lower Hell. The existence of Purgatory was proclaimed in 1254 on the strength of two New Testament texts; one from Christ (Matthew 12:31-2) and one Paul (1 Corinthians 3:13 and 15).
 - 22 All of this was pulled together in 1343 by Pope Gregory VI in order to rationalise the system. Christian offerings effectively became a payment for indulgences although conditions were laid down as to their use. Free indulgences were granted to the destitute by way of welfare relief. This was the system that was in place until 1476 when it was extended on the suggestion of a theologian called Raimund Peraudi that indulgences should be made available to help the souls of those already dead and presumably languishing in Purgatory as well as those still alive. Now the system was complete and waiting for Luther.
 - 23 The dominant style of piety in the 15th century, an intense, introspective, orthodox, movement which vigorously affirmed that the clergy had no special position in the eyes of God. Its earliest evangelist was Geert Groote who conducted a roving ministry in the Low Countries. A community of friends was built up around Deventer that took on the character of a formal religious order after the death of Groote, the Brethren of the Common Life. The devotional lifestyle was open to both men and women and their children, all aspiring to the standards of the priesthood, with a programme of practical action and organisation of thought summarised in *The Imitation of Christ* usually attributed to Thomas à Kempis (c1380-1471). After his vigil before Our Lady of Montserrat, this was the book that was attributed with the most influence on developing the spirituality of Íñigo López de Loyola (Ignatius Loyola). Ironically, in later years many leading Catholics, especially the Jesuits, were suspicious of mystical claims. Spanish mystics were often in trouble with the Inquisition. Teresa of Ávila (1515-82) is the outstanding example. Compared with the contemplative, cloistered life of Carmelites today, the lifestyle of many nuns had become lax, visitors were free to come and go, and the nuns, many of whom came from wealthy families, had servants living in the convent with them. Teresa’s own life had become very comfortable. According to *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* she had her own oratory, kitchen and guest room.
- Ordered to write her autobiography by her Dominican confessor she wrote with abandon of nervous illnesses, ecstasies and religious visions, mingled with apprehension about the growth of her soul through prayer towards union with God. The Inquisition confiscated her manuscript. It took the intervention of Philip II to retrieve it.
- 24 From the early 13th century, women could choose to live lives of prayer, chastity and service without being bound by vows, existing in a highly unusual state of autonomy somewhere between the world and the cloister. With the death of Marcella Pattyn in Courtrai on 14 April 2013 *béguines* were no more.
 - 25 Jan van Eyck *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele* 1434-6 oil on panel 141x176.5cm (incl frame) Groeningemuseum, Bruges; Jan van Eyck *The Virgin and Child with Chancellor Rolin* c1435 oil on panel 66x62cm Musée du Louvre, Paris
 - 26 Joos van Cleve was a master “most outstanding in colour” according to Guicciardini yet Van Mander condemned him for “excessive arrogance and inflated conceit” and, with Lampsonius, called him a madman, confusing him with his son who went insane. However, the *Madonna of the Cherries* was in series production from c1525, eg Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen, and Joos van Cleve and collaborator *Virgin and Child* c1525 oil on panel 70.5x52.5cm Metropolitan Museum, New York (see Peter van den Brink with Alice Taatgen and Heinrich Becker *Joos van Cleve: Leonardo des Nordens* 2011); Robert Campin or possibly a follower *The Virgin and Child before a Firescreen* c1440 oil with egg tempera on panel 63.4x48.5cm National Gallery, London; Hans Memling *Virgin and Child with Maarten van Nieuwenbove* c1487 oil on panels 44.7x33.5cm and 52.5x41.5cm Hospitaalmuseum Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges.
 - 27 As the mother of Christ who St Paul identifies as the ‘wisdom of God’ (First Epistle to the Corinthians 1:24 – “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” and 1:30 “Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption”) Our Lady is the human fulfilment of wisdom (as ideal wife and mother established in Proverbs 31) by virtue of her role as Theotokos. With reference to the *Prado Adoration* see chapter 1, *Redemptions*. Now in a private collection in Ghent, a *Virgin and Child* that bears some elements of the Bosch repertoire, a signature comparable to the one on the Bruges *Last Judgement*, provisionally dated some time after 1500, dendrochronological investigation placing it after 1483, displays another ugly Christ-child presented on the ‘seat of wisdom’.
 - 28 In the Egyptian world the heavens were clear – the sun was in the centre of the heaven at noon. The sun made its nightly journey under the earth and a theory developed as to what happened in the realms of darkness. All this was applied to the journey of the soul in order that souls should aspire to reach the world of the stars and the gods. They might have to travel through a dark underworld to get there. The Egyptians developed the idea of judgement after death when the soul would be required to give an account of its life on earth and what crimes it had or had not committed. This account was given to the gods in the presence of the spirit of truth and the image that appears from the Middle Kingdom onwards is one of a heart being waved in the balance against ‘the feather of truth’. A heart heavy with misdeeds, the scale pan going down on the side of the heart compared with truth and it would be consigned to a waiting monster or consumed by fires, or at best, it would be condemned to wander among the punishments of the underworld with demons and grotesque goings on. However, in order to forestall this you could write ‘the negative confession’ and provided you had enough money to bribe your way through the underworld, you could escape. And if your heart was free of guilt you would go straight to your place among the gods and the stars. This went right through Egyptian culture and this platform has been recognisable in many religions since.
 - 29 In the Greek tradition there was an underworld ruled over by Pluto or the god Hades. For Homer and Virgil the trip was a morality lesson. The journey made by Odysseus to the underworld includes very specific directions as to how to get there and what to do once you arrived. He meets a lot of people, including his mother, eventually becomes scared and leaves. Virgil’s emphasis is Platonic. It is still a pious journey for knowledge; by encountering one’s past one

could get security about the future. And whereas Odysseus did not cross the threshold of Hades, Aeneas goes through the underworld to the gates of the city where there is fire; he can hear the rattle of chains, the groans, and see the torments and the punishments, together with the great celebrities of hell – ‘I’m a celebrity, get me out of here’.

- 30 The Monotheistic Zoroastrians developed the notion of Heaven introducing the element of personal morality, that where you go in the afterlife depended very much on the moral choices you make on earth and, with the growth of individualism, your journey beyond this world became important. This fed into Judaism primarily through the exile to Babylon and the culture shock that their God had not failed them, but that they were at fault. From this extraordinary expansion of thinking, from a tribal God into a universal God, the Christian idea of God developed.
- 31 Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c155-230AD) Tertullian, lived his entire life in Carthage, the first great writer of Latin Christianity, inevitably therefore referred to as the ‘father of the Latin Church’, responsible for *trinitas*, the Trinity, *tres Personae*, *una Substantia*, three persons one substance (from the Greek *treis Hypostases*, *Homoousios*) *vetus testamentum* and *novum testamentum*, the old and new testaments and “Christians are made, not born”. Later became a Montanist (a Christian sectarian movement) was condemned by the Church as a heretic, taught Cyprian the predecessor of Augustine, the founder of Latin theology. A full life.
- 32 The Apocalypse of St John (Revelation) 14: 9-11 and 20: 1-3, 7-10 give the flavour.
- 33 Robert Hughes *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* 1968 p36
- 34 The remarkable triumvirate of Petrarch – Francesco Petrarca (1304-74), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-75) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) all emerged in Florence, a city of over 100,000 people since the 13th century.
- 35 Ice turns to fire in Hell. The origin of the fire image is Gehena, named after a valley outside Jerusalem where a pagan king sacrificed children, a place of abomination so awful that it was consigned to become the city’s rubbish dump. It was always burning and hence a municipal rubbish dump, eternally on fire, became the eternal image of Hell. The older image, however, was ice that comes from the freezing Hell of the Zoroastrian tradition, based on a folk memory of the worst times people could remember, a very deep sense and fear of the cold. Ice was also used to represent the futility and sterility of life, the anxieties within us. Carl Watkins *The Undiscovered Country: Journeys among the dead* 2013, takes as his starting point a 19th century painting *The Great Days of Wrath*, to explain how, despite changes in religion over the centuries, beliefs about the dead changed very little since Augustine; how, despite being banned, prayers for the dead were still said, and how souls were believed to wander out of Purgatory to haunt their enemies and plead for their release long after the Reformation had done away with this intermediate state: pxiv “The essence of the Christian prophecy John Martin painted... Endlessly elaborated and reconceived, read, preached and for some of the time figured in art, it had become fixed in the imaginations of men and women down the generations.”
- 36 Two Florentine architects, Filippo Brunelleschi and Antonio Manetti were the first to compute the Inferno’s extent.
- 37 Other sites in Italy were identified, but one alternative, and equally celebrated, entrance, was a cave approachable only from the sea at Taenarus, today, a short drive south from Marmari in the Peloponnese.
- 38 Martin Schwarz, curator of *Heaven, Hell, and Dying Well: Images of Death in the Middle Ages* at the Getty in 2012.
- 39 Galileo defended Manetti’s calculations against the more recent number crunching of Alessandro Vellutello in 1544 – *Due lezioni all’Accademia Fiorentina circa la figura, sito e grandezza dell’Inferno di Dante* 1588, see *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei* vol 9 1968 pp 29-57. Galileo’s two part inaugural lecture to the Accademia is available in English, translated by Mark Peterson, online at www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/mpeterso/galileo/inferno.html (For the impact of maps, see chapter 8)
- 40 The nine circles of Hell begin with limbo where the classical figures reside, stuck there because they had neither baptism nor faith, down beyond where Virgil travelled, to where fortune-tellers are twisted backwards to only look behind and forced to walk backwards forever because they were presumptuous in foretelling the future, flatterers are covered in filth, thieves end up in pits of snakes; they are bitten, reconstituted and then bitten again, forever and ever and ever. The lustful are swept around in winds because they could not control their passions, now they cannot control themselves. The punishments were horrible. Then the fires start with the heretics, fraudsters and violent criminals, down on into the pit, where the treacherous reside with corrupt Popes who are held inverted, a macabre grove of suicides accompanied by monstrous half bestial, half human forms, on and on through this funnel of Hell to a monstrous, hairy, bat-winged three-faced Satan, entombed in ice, its three mouths each chewing on a very bad person, Brutus and Cassius either side of Judas as a mess of slubber and gore spills down its front.
- 41 Tondal’s story was printed in Dutch in ’s-Hertogenbosch in 1484. Robert Hughes *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* 1968 p166.
- 42 TS Eliot *Selected Essays* 1932 pp229, 374. Also Mario Praz ‘TS Eliot and Dante’ *The Southern Review* 11/3 Winter 1937 pp525-48
- 43 See Barbara Reynolds (2006) *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man* and see *Dante in English* co-edited by Eric Griffiths and Matthew Reynolds for the poem: 100 cantos, over 14,000 lines each of 11 syllables arranged in triplets, written in Dante’s native Tuscan – a language closer to modern Italian than Shakespeare is to modern English.
- 44 *The Commedia*, describes a journey to God through the Pit of Hell guided by Virgil to contemplate the harrowing fate of the damned (*Inferno*), after which he is led to the Mount of Expiation (*Purgatorio*) and the Circles of Heaven where he meets a transfigured vision of Beatrice, the girl he loved as a young man (*Paradiso*). The epic ends with a vision of the glory of God. *The Divine Comedy* as it became known to Dante’s admirers is a synthesis of poetry and philosophy, encapsulating Christian views of the Middle Ages, suffused with the violence of political and religious conflict, a dramatisation of the poet’s own fate and the ferocity of his response to being exiled in his mid-30s. Dante may be wandering through a mysterious world of arcane theology, but he does so with an impassioned, aggrieved and vengeful human voice. The *Commedia* is an adventure story but it is also an allegory of the spiritual journey of a Christian soul from sin to salvation that is eventually rewarded with a blinding vision of God. A teeming throng of the Damned, the Hopeful and the Blessed inhabits the moral architecture that Dante has constructed, all of whom are precisely located according to their vices and virtues. (Dan Brown *The Da Vinci Code* 2003 was a fanciful mystery-thriller-conspiracy tale that became a worldwide best-seller despite its historical, artistic, architectural, religious and scientific inaccuracies. Sophia Maines, 7 October 2005 *LJ World* reported that Salman Rushdie called it “a novel so bad that it gives bad novels a bad name”, stating “Even Dan Brown must live. Preferably not write, but live”. Despite being lampooned, parodied, and prosecuted for plagiarism by both fiction and non-fiction writers, in 2006 a successful film version inevitably followed.)
- 45 When he gets to heaven it is mainly repetitive imagery of Dante and Beatrice talking and there is little to show. Milton pointed out that Heaven was boring. It was a failure on our part to be unable to understand the contentment of continuous ecstasy. Orwell said Heaven was like choir practice in a jeweller’s shop. Aquinas spent his entire life writing until he had a split-second experience of the love of God and never wrote another word. He did not speak for four or five months and when pushed said, “no, there are no words left”. It typifies the problem, to describe the indescribable sounds banal.
- 46 Instead of representing death simply as a hooded figure that would call upon an Everyman to account for his life, Shakespeare and other writers explored the many intellectual possibilities and controversies raised by new ways of thinking about mortality. For Hamlet, death

was “the undiscovered country” from which no traveller returns: *Hamlet* (1600-01) Act III scene I “... But that the dread of something after death, / That undiscover’d country from whose bourne / No traveller returns, puzzles the will / And makes us rather bear those ills we have / Than fly to others that we know not of? / Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.”

- 47 The Devil appears in the Book of Job. He is a tempter, licensed by God to test the fortitude and belief of Job who up until this point has had an easy life. The Devil destroys the good life that Job has built up for himself. However, Job remains phlegmatic in the face of adversity. Even when the Devil is allowed by God to punish Job further, covering his body with scabs, and his wife accuses him of trying to maintain his innocence: “... Dost thou still continue in thy simplicity? Better thou shouldst renounce God, and have done with living” to which Job replies, “Thou hast; spoken like one of the foolish women: if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?” Job 2:9-10. In Islam, Satan is cast out of Heaven, but he is a deceiver, a con artist, a trickster. This leads to misunderstanding. When the USA is called ‘the great Satan’, the West is presented with a choice between good and evil, whereas in reality, what is being said is that the USA is lying, it is a great deceiver. This is a joke, because the great deceiver is ultimately under the power of God. It is a joke that has, perhaps deliberately, been misunderstood.
- 48 Zoroastrianism introduced Judaism to the concept of God as vulnerable. After the Exile of the Jewish elite to Babylon in 606 BC the Jews are exposed to a mortal combat between good and evil and in c166BC, the Maccabees Revolt was an existential crisis for the Jews where the Greek colonial power savagely enforced civilisation, and the Jews were confronted with the fact that they were obeying God’s Law and yet still they suffered, were massacred and did not win their battles, they concluded that there must be a force ‘against goodness’ that was actively working against them.
- 49 Matthew 4: 1-11 ‘Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’” Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.” At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: ‘The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.’ Christ only uses the word Satan once in the Bible, the rest of the time he uses the word Devil from the Greek *diabolos* meaning slanderer, adversary or persecutor.
- 50 The Manicheans, a missionary movement, was very successful from 3AD onwards, spreading out from the Eastern Roman Empire both to the west and to China. The Christian Manichean heresy, derived from Gnosticism, also fed the stories of a force for good and a force for evil; the one associated with light the other with darkness. For the Gnostics the force for evil was subordinate to the force for good while for Manicheans the force for evil was an independent force from the beginning. The two were thought to be in permanent conflict. The world in which we live, the world of flesh and matter were entirely governed by the force of evil. Trapped inside us was another world, a world of light and truth. The whole purpose of our existence was to escape from this evil world, governed by the Prince of Darkness, and get into the world of truth. Augustine started out as a Manichean, spending nine years with the movement, before starting out to define orthodox Christianity as opposed to Manicheanism. He wanted to limit the role of the Devil, insisting that evil is simply the absence of God, denying that there is an independent force for evil in the world. “Deliver us from evil” perhaps making the evil we are protected from an evil that we are capable of, and not an external evil force.
- 51 Rudolf Wittkower ‘The Marvels of the East’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* V 1942 pp159-179
- 52 *I Need Art Like I Need God* was the title of a Tracey Emin Exhibition at the South London Gallery in 1997. Emin has described her ‘Galileo moment’ a year before. As she tells it, she was broke and considering giving up art as a career. She found a very cheap camera on the train back to Margate, but there was no guard on the train and hence no one to hand the camera in to. So she took the camera home. She had £5 in her pocket, she bought a slide film, went and took some photographs of Margate, the sea and spring tides, giant great big waves, ‘I got a piece of chalk and I wrote on the seawall: I need art like I need God’. A year later her show opened, she walked into the gallery on opening night and ‘I thought this is my moment, I’ve arrived’. The moral of this story: ‘there is no guard’. If there had been one, she might never have become an artist. Emin talking to Mark Lawson BBC Radio 4 *Front Row* June 2008
- 53 James Rosenquist *Painting Below Zero* 2009 p18
- 54 Charlotte Higgins *Guardian* 1 August 2008
- 55 *God, Art and Tracey Emin* The White Cube website. “As Tracey Emin may, if she wishes, hold infinity in the palms of her hands, and eternity in an hour, then we shall certainly see Tracey Emin in a grain of Margate sand.”
- 56 Emin’s art school teacher famously told her that drawing was not her strong point: “Some of us have got it, ducks, and some of us haven’t. And let’s face it, you haven’t.” Some now see her work as a brilliant riposte to that. I do not. (But then, Michelangelo claimed Titian could not draw. Everyone has their opinions.)
- 57 See Mary D Garrard *The Art Bulletin* 62/1 March 1980 pp97-112
- 58 The one genuine sensation was a really great portrait by Marcus Harvey of a serial child killer called *Myra Hindley*. It was composed of the handprints of children. It attracted unprecedented international media attention, was attacked twice and withdrawn from the exhibition before being rehung behind a protective screen. Saatchi bought the painting from Harvey’s dealer for £11,000 and sold it for an estimated £100,000. A self-portrait of the artist is described on the White Cube gallery website as depicting “a meat cleaver in his hand, and covered in blood, as if caught in the act of an unimaginable atrocity”.
- 59 She was subsequently offered £1 million to remake the tent.
- 60 One of 100 works that, sadly, Kelly Grovier believes will define our age. *100 Works of Art That Will Define Our Age* 2013
- 61 Peter Conrad *Observer* 14 September 2008
- 62 The Academy’s main annual event is its Summer Exhibition, an event once referred to by Brian Sewell as “a boozy club for old farts who flatter themselves that they belong in the same room as modern masters... a genteel, civilised, very British hell”.
- 63 Larry Silver *Jheronimus Bosch and the Issue of Origins* paper delivered 2007 at the second Bosch conference, later published as ‘Jheronimus Bosch and the Question of Origins’ *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp34-56
- 64 Who called it *The Last Judgement* and when? Did the artist give it its title? Did the commissioner? Did the artist give his pictures titles at all? What a picture is called can tell us a lot about it. Today, most of the paintings by Bosch are known by titles that were only given to them in the 19th century. As an adjunct to the Bosch Research and Conservation Project, archival investigations will determine as far as possible what the paintings were called, by whom, and when.
- 65 *The Last Judgement* oil on panel, central panel 163x127.5cm, side shutters *St James* and *St Bavo* 163.7x60cm Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna

- 66 Klaus Lankheit *Das Triptychon als Pathosformel* 1959, see Marijnissen *Hieronymus Bosch The Complete Works* 2007 p50
- 67 Local practice might vary from six to 24 candles.
- 68 The phrase 'miraculous threshold' is Lynn Jacobs' description. One has to accept the concept of 'doors' (from the contemporary word *dueren*) to a triptych in order to cross a threshold; the more descriptive word 'wings' of an open triptych or 'shutters' thus being rendered debateable. (Jacobs notes that wings, *vleugelen*, are seldom referred to in archival sources.)
- 69 Hans Belting 2005 *Hieronymus Bosch, Garden of Earthly Delights* p83
- 70 Triptychs reflected the essential 'three-ness' of Jesus' life and Christianity: Mary, Joseph and Jesus; three wise men; three temptations; three years of teaching; three hours of death and agony; three crosses at Calvary; a life of 33 years; resurrection on the third day, the Trinity. Dante's *Commedia* also used the rule of three: three books each of 33 cantos.
- 71 "Within the bowels of these elements, / Where we have tortured, and remain for ever. / Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed / In one self place; but where we are is hell, / And where hell is, there must we ever be... All places shall be hell that is not heaven." Christopher Marlowe *Dr Faustus* 1604/1616/1619 Act 2 scene 1, spoken by Mephistopheles who warns Faustus about the horrors of Hell. Faustus makes a pact with the Devil without really understanding what he is doing. A secular Renaissance man, with no respect for traditional religion, he thinks Hell a mere fable. In spite of the warnings he does not conceive the reality of Hell, nor that it is inescapable, seeing, in the last line quoted, it as merely a continuation of life on earth. (The authoritative version has been lost. None of the available texts are considered entirely faithful to Marlowe, presenting a problem of interpretation for any director.)
- 72 According to Zevenboom, see Marijnissen 2007 *Hieronymus Bosch The Complete Works* p218. Jan Mosmans had previously calculated 2.56 x 3.16m in 1947, making it larger than any known work by Bosch. Pokorny has made a case for Louis de Bruges, also known as Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, and a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, having possibly seen the work of Bosch as early as 1481 and subsequently commissioning work from the artist. Two drawings by Bosch in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, and linked to the *Garden of Earthly Delights* were "probably ordered by Lodewijk", and executed c1490 prior to the *Garden* that Pokorny believes to be an early work. The drawings, one of a Council of War and the other of a battle between birds and mammals, were identified as workshop by Stephanie Buck in 2001. In 2002 Fritz Koreny attributed them to Bosch himself. They were "perhaps... commissioned... for a series of paintings or tapestries, which were probably never made... I see no stylistical or historical reason to exclude the possibility that Bosch drafted the war between birds and mammals about 1485-92 as a first sketch for a project commissioned by or for the rebellious Lodewijk van Gruuthuse" always remembering that Lodewijk later fell foul of various authorities, spent the years 1485-8 in prison, and died in 1491 in Bruges. Erwin Pokorny *Lodewijk van Gruuthuse alias Louis de Bruges - A Potential Patron of Bosch* 2012. For an overall résumé of "What we know and would like to know" about the "state of affairs concerning the research on Bosch's patronage" see Eric De Bruyn *Jheronimus Bosch: his patrons and his public* 2012
- 73 Van Schoute pointed out there was no proof that the commission had ever been undertaken or completed.
- 74 Arvi Wattel 'Stichterportretten bij Jheronimus Bosch' *Desipientia* 8/2 2001 pp15-16 (in particular p17n5). GCM van Dijk *Op zoek naar Jheronimus van Aken alias Bosch. De feiten. Familie, vrienden en opdrachtgevers* c1400-c1635 2001 pp64-65 & p91
- 75 The St Bavo panel shows indications of an earlier orientation of the content that would reinforce the theory that it was originally a left hand panel, and thus painted before the Garden of Eden scene now on the inside of the left panel. Considering Bavo's promotion to sainthood, the supporting characters in the panel are rather unsympathetic.
- 76 *El Camino de Santiago* earned one a plenary indulgence. Second only to a pilgrimage to Rome, the dust raised by pilgrims on their way to the 'field of stars' were said to have created the 'Milky Way' galaxy. Whether the origin of Compostela is *Campos Stellae* the 'field of stars', or the colloquial *Composita Tella* continues to provoke debate. *El Camino de Santiago* is a Spanish phrase used for the Milky Way.
- 77 Laurinda Dixon *Bosch* 2003 p293 believes Bavo is "a portrait of Philip the Handsome" comparing him to an anonymous portrait in the Rijksmuseum, which is debateable. However the identification helps with identifying the painting as the commission of 1504. The discovery of an unidentified kneeling donor and a flag or streamer, subsequently removed from the lower left of the central hand panel makes it more difficult; Roger Van Schoute and Monique Verboom *Jérôme Bosch* 2000 p181, also Renate Trnek and Heribert Hutter *Das Weltgerichtstriptychon von Hieronymus Bosch* 1988. If Bavo 'is' Philip, an identification made by Bax well before Dixon in 1983, then it is a very youthful mid-1490s portrait, an observation that leads Vermet to date the Vienna *Last Judgement* c1496 along with the *Prado Epiphany* due to the "close resemblance of the outer wings".
- 78 The son of a Galilean fisherman, a brother of John the beloved disciple, possibly a first cousin of Jesus, James was a principle witness at the Transfiguration and the agony of Gethsemane, a "son of thunder" (Gospel According to St Mark 3:17 "And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he named them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder"). Destined to sit beside the Lord in Heaven, a Christian martyr in AD44, his body was believed to have been miraculously transported to Compostela with some of his relics kept in the church of St-Saturnin at Toulouse. Bavo on the other hand was a minor saint, a Netherlander, son of a lord of Austrasia (basically the Low Countries and areas south of the Ruhr) who reputedly atoned for a life of excess by distributing his material wealth among the poor, hence securing his place at the emergence of a culture of guilt in the west and subsequent canonisation.
- 79 In 1959 Marie-José Onghena was the first to suggest a resemblance in her two-volume dissertation *De iconografie van Philips de Schone*. Then Bax in 1983 *Hieronymus Bosch and Lucas Cranach: Two Last Judgement triptychs*, later Silver and many others have suggested a resemblance between the Bosch saint and Philip but never supplied a satisfactory explanation for it. Philip, son of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian of Austria, heir to Valois-Burgundy and the House of Habsburg, cast as St Bavo or St Hippolytus, a local saint of secondary importance: what could be the connection? Following Mary's untimely death in 1482, Maximilian used all the dynastic propaganda available to him to signal the family's imperial possessions and the rights of his three year old son. This included the symbol of power chosen by Mary, the falcon, a symbol that survived in the margins of ducal iconography to represent Burgundian patrimony. Researching independently, Olga Karaskova and Jos Koldewey came to similar conclusions. Koldewey found a Bavo-Hippolytus link but does not accept the resemblance to Philip the Fair that Karaskova proposes. At this point it should be added the two scenes depicted are both disconnected and confusing: a figure in an entrance and a figure in a landscape, both facing to the right in compositions that overall direct our eyes to the right. Both saints are located above shields that are devoid of a coat-of-arms. The beggars only add to the confusion but they may well represent the figures that hang around church doorways. Changes are clearly discernable to the Bavo panel. A possible solution, posited by Koldewey in 2013, is that Hippolyte de Berthoz might be the commissioner, that the picture could have been intended for the Sint-Salvator in Bruges, and that the entrance chapel was a possible location. The chapel had an unusual entrance from the street (that has since been closed up) and the restricted space (still visible) would explain the panels both directing our eyes to travel to the right (and even the beggars). A St James for a St James chapel makes sense, and the site specific nature explains why the panels do not work elsewhere, leading to so much confusion. The questions to then ask are, if commissioned for this church, did the triptych ever hang there, and if not, why not? (Note that César Péman suggested movement to the right on the closed wings in Vienna, like the two images of the *Pedlar* in Rotterdam and Madrid, were symbolically positive as these characters were all following the road to salvation 'Sobre la interpretación del viandante al reverse del Carro de Heno de El Bosco' *Archivo Español de Arte* vol XXXIV 1961 pp125-139. But then he made no comment regarding the sinners inside the *Haywain*

and the *Last Judgement* who are also moving right, towards Hell.) Of further significance is the fact that if the hypothetical identification of Philip as commissioner of the *Last Judgement* was shown to be wrong, and the financial secretary of Charles the Bold, Hippolyte de Berthoz, had in fact ordered the Vienna triptych, then an earlier dating of the work is almost inevitable with consequences for the overall chronology of the work of Bosch that for so many scholars has always hinged on the identification of the painting in Vienna as the result of the commission in 1504.

- 80 The honour of being the one to lead the elect into eternal paradise was regularly transferred to each successive emperor, nevertheless once the millennium had passed, 1500 was always viewed as the key date.
- 81 Matthew 22:14 (the parable of the marriage feast) and 20:16 (the parable of the labourers in the vineyard) – “So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen”.
- 82 Various authors have suggested his visual reference may have included the extraordinary *Three Mouths of Hell* from a full page miniature for the Office of the Dead, Vespers, Ms M945, fol 168v, that “fuses forms from the worlds of animals and objects” (see p356 catalogue Museum Het Valkhof/The Morgan Library 2009) produced around 1440 for *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, one of the finest, most opulent, and inventive Books of Hours, a book Bosch may have also referred to for the deathbed scene for his painting *The Death of the Miser* (Ms M917 p180). The number of full page illustrations alone make this a remarkable Book of Hours, along with the 60 illustrated suffrages, a number of illustrated intercessory prayers to saints being without precedent. Another possible source was a tour of the soul considered comparable to Dante: the *Visions of Tondal*, a version of which, illustrated by Simon Marmion, was commissioned by the Duchess of Burgundy, Margaret of York, in 1474, as noted first by Walter Gibson *Hieronymus Bosch* 1973 pp57, 60.
- 83 Thomas à Kempis *Imitation of Christ* see Silver p414 n50
- 84 From the summary of Catholic Doctrine, the Credo, the profession of faith: ‘And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end.’
- 85 taken from Gospel According to St Matthew 25:31-46
- 86 Marijnissen & Ruyffelaere 2007 p215
- 87 The idea of the Particular Judgement took hold between the sixth and eighth centuries as part of the adjustment to accepting that the Second Coming was not, after all, quite as imminent as once thought. A variety of views developed as to the impact of this. Some thought that even the saintliest would go to Purgatory for a short stay before being admitted to Heaven. Bosch represents an alternative view that a very small number will go straight to Heaven when they die. Everyone agreed that some others would go directly to Hell as being irredeemably damned. Everyone else went to Purgatory where, as Bosch portrays, their punishment would reflect the nature of the sins of which they are to be purged. Everyone who went to Purgatory would go to Heaven following the Last Judgement. Purgatory is then no more, which is why paintings of the Last Judgement always display a binary outcome: Heaven or Hell. As the artist would not have wanted this painting to be confused with a Last Judgement, the traditional symbols associated with that event are missing. It is between the two Judgements that the soul expiates its sins. Gospel According to St Luke 12:59 “I say to thee, thou shalt not go out thence, until you pay the very last mite.”
- 88 For Catholics, it is an article of faith contained in all the creeds that “He ascended into Heaven. [Apostles’ Creed] He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, [Nicene Creed] at whose coming all men must rise with their bodies and are to render an account of their deeds. [Athanasian Creed]”. The Roman Church has always held that besides the Particular Judgement of each individual a general one determining the just rewards and punishments would be made at the time of the Second Coming of Christ on the Last Day coinciding with the return of Enoch and Elijah, the conversion of Jews, the revelation of the ‘man of sin’, the ‘son of perdition’, and universal, catastrophic conflagration, with trumpets sounding to awaken the dead as ‘the sign of the Son of Man’ appears in the heavens possibly as the Cross or a cross of light. Judgement itself is attributed to the Son of God who will judge the world as Man and would take place in an instant of Divine illumination. None of this appears in the paintings by Bosch.
- 89 Catholic doctrine of the particular judgement is that ‘immediately after death the eternal destiny of each separated soul is decided by the just judgement of God’. Pope Eugene IV set out the incontrovertible truth of this shortly before the birth of Bosch. This Augustinian monk from Venice presided over a stormy pontificate, quelling sedition, staving off schism, raising armies and despatching a fleet to resist Turkish advances, nonetheless consolidated papal authority across Europe in the Decree of Union of 1439. Exiled from Rome for a decade following revolution in 1434, he lived to see the entire Christian world, in theory, obedient to the Holy See, and the decrees signed in Florence have since been the solid basis of the spiritual authority of the papacy. The Decree nevertheless also found room for the declaration that ‘souls that are perfectly pure are at once admitted to the beatific vision of the Godhead (*ipsam Deum unum et trinum*) and those who depart in actual mortal sin, or merely with original sin, are at once consigned to eternal punishment, the quality of which corresponds to their sin (*paenis tamen disparibus*). The doctrine is also in the profession of faith of Michael Palaeologus, 1274, the Bull *Benedictus Deus* of Benedict XII in 1336, and after the life of Bosch was reasserted in the professions of faith of Gregory XIII and Benedict XIV.
- 90 a system rationalized by Pope Clement VI in 1343 on the eve of the Black Death ‘now for total, now for partial remission of punishment due for temporal sins’ for which pious Christians showed their grateful thanks with an offering that quickly became a straight financial trade, payment for an indulgence.
- 91 WDJ Cargill Thompson ‘Seeing the Reformation in Medieval Perspective’ *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25, 1974 pp297-307
- 92 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 8:24 “Spe salvi facti sumus”
- 93 Epistle of St Paul to the Hebrews 10:22-3
- 94 First Epistle of St Peter 3:15
- 95 Epistle of St Paul to the Philippians 2:12
- 96 Augustine had no doubt ‘that souls are judged when they depart from the body, before they come to that judgement which must be passed on them when reunited to the body and are tormented and glorified in that same flesh which they here inhabited’ (*De anima et ejus origine* 11 no8) and Aquinas argued that ‘souls [may] be held back by some debt, for which its flight must needs be delayed until the soul is first of all cleansed’: see St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* question 69 ‘Matters concerning the resurrection, and first of the place where souls are after death’ article 2.
- 97 “Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgement that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through a purification or immediately, – or immediate and everlasting damnation.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1022 Article 12 “I believe in life everlasting”. The Particular Judgement.) As St John of the Cross, a contemporary of Bosch, stated ‘at the evening of life we shall be judged on our love’. “Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ.” (ibid 1021) St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians talks of passing through fire to become open to receiving God and enable us to take a place at the eternal marriage-feast. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15) The fire that burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. That encounter is the decisive act of judgement.
- 98 ‘Occam’s razor’ as this quotation is known (entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily) has become Vermet’s theme song. I use it here to show it can apply equally to alternative conclusions to the ones that he draws. Unfortunately, Vermet, uses a quote not attributable to Occam but to a later scholar: *Entia non sunt praeter necessitatem multiplicanda* that he translates as, “when all the facts are the same, the simplest solution to a problem tends to be the best one”. William was a 14th century Franciscan philosopher-theologian

- (c1285-1349) from Ockham in southern England, summoned to Avignon to answer for his unorthodox views, sentenced to death as a heretic (having himself declared the Pope, John XXII, a heretic), escaped to Bavaria where he took refuge under King Louis IV for the last 20 years of his life. Nominalists, like William, denied assumptions embodied in Thomas Aquinas' thinking and remodelling of Greek philosophy to Christianity, and the line of analytical thought that originated with Aristotle. Believing divine truths to be a matter of faith, nominalism has been regularly misconstrued as a 'high road to Protestantism', but in its gradual domination of Northern European universities throughout the 15th century did exert huge influence over the Reformers through their education. Allied to mysticism that flourished from the 13th century, it broadened out into the *Devotio Moderna*, the intense and creatively imaginative way of reaching out to God that tended towards introspection and, greatly assisted by the arrival of printing, became the dominant outlet for pious expression in the 15th century.
- 99 By 1965, however, De Tolnay had serious doubts as to the authenticity of the *Last Judgement* due to "the stiffness of the calligraphy, the ungainly draughtsmanship of the figures and the lack of expression in their faces" also noting with reference to both Glück 1904 and Hymans 1884-5, that "the shields on the reverse of the wings have no coats of arms, which would be understandable in the case of a copy". He finally decided it was "a copy of reduced size." *Hieronymus Bosch* 1966 pp359-360
- 100 For a brief history of that 'magic' and a call for 'more scientific connoisseurship' with conservators and curators undertaking more 'collaborative studies' see Maryan Ainsworth *From Connoisseurship to Technical Art History* 2005
- 101 Peter Klein 'Dendrochronological Analysis of Works by Hieronymus Bosch and His Followers' *Hieronymus Bosch – New Insights Into His Life and Work* 2001
- 102 Despite my criticism I am indebted to Bernard Vermet for making copies of his papers delivered in Tallinn in 2004 and 's-Hertogenbosch in 2007 together with an expanded unpublished version from 2005 and a number of his comparative charts available to me.
- 103 Bernard Vermet, Tallinn 2004
- 104 The Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory is an independent tree-ring dating laboratory with close links for training with the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford University, as well as the Ancient Monuments Laboratory of English Heritage. Its website quotes Daniel Miles *The Interpretation, Presentation and Use of Tree-Ring Dates in Vernacular Architecture* vol28 1997 pp40-56
- 105 Professor Dr Piotr Bienkowski, archaeologist (formerly Director of Manchester Museum, Head of Antiquities at National Museums Liverpool, and Chair of Renaissance North West Collections for the Future) in correspondence with the author 2007 (emphasis in the original).
- 106 See introduction – 'scope and method of inquiry' for probability theory.
- 107 Ludwig Baldass 'Die Chronologie der Garmälde des Hieronymus Bosch' *Jahrbuch der königlichen Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 37, 1917 pp177-95 'Zur künstlerischen Entwicklung des Hieronymus Bosch' *Annuaire des Musées roaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 1, 1938 pp47-71
- 108 The disputed Bosch *Crucifixion* has given rise to chronological discussion emanating from its landscape (the rolling hills, distant cityscape, a windmill) together with the unidentified black-caped kneeling donor being presented by St Peter to Christ, on account of his striped trousers that do not accord with an early dating c1477/83. However, affinities between both the landscape and the holy figures with some of the characters in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* has helped those who would argue for an early dating of what is generally considered to be a mature work. Looked at in isolation the *Crucifixion* landscape has also been likened to the *Adoration of the Magi* triptych, another work from around the turn of the century.
- 109 Jacques Combe suggested that the images in the artist's "mind remained alien to the majority of his contemporaries" which, looking at some of them, one would have to dispute. *Jheronimus Bosch* transl Ethel Duncan 1946 p48
- 110 At college, even when we attempted exercises with the 'wrong hand', while the quality of execution varied, the style remained remarkably similar. Ambidextrous artists generally demonstrate a stronger hand but with a very similar style.
- 111 Bernard Vermet *Hieronymus Bosch – New Insights Into His Life and Work* 2001 p87
- 112 *ibid* p87
- 113 Larry Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 pp297-8. Inconclusive – but he still suggested a chronology that he later regretted, calling it a "folly". See *Historians of Netherlandish Art, Review of Books* vol 29/2 November 2012 p19
- 114 Vermet *Hieronymus Bosch – New Insights Into His Life and Work* 2001 p98
- 115 Marijnissen *Bosch The Complete Works* 2007 supplement pvii
- 116 Ludwig Baldass *Hieronymus Bosch* 1960 pp73-83 "I have not ventured to attach dates"
- 117 Jacques Combe *Jheronimus Bosch* transl Ethel Duncan 1946 p39 and, interestingly, with regards De Tolnay's change of stance, p80 "This was once thought to be a small-size copy of the *Last Judgement* which Bosch was commissioned to paint by Philip the Fair, in 1504, an hypothesis now abandoned. At present, the general view is that it is a faithful contemporary copy of an original that has disappeared."
- 118 The only youthful thing about it are the child-like adults, on which subject see the next chapter, bearing in mind that children are frequently a reflection of one's old age, and the mirror of one's decline.
- 119 Possibly an abbreviated paraphrasing of the last pages of *The Meaning of Relativity*, 5th edition, as recorded in *US Reader's Digest*, July 1977. Along similar lines one might add Aristotle: "nature operates in the shortest way possible".
- 120 Camille Benoit 'Le Jugement Dernier de Louvain' *Chroniques des arts et de la curiosité* 15, 1899 pp131-133, 143-144. Albert Châtelet 'Sur un Jugement dernier de Dieric Bouts' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 1965 pp17-43
- 121 Denys van Leeuwen, 1402-71 (also Leuw or Lieuwe, Ryckel or à Ryckel) and more commonly Dionysius, the name he took on entering the Carthusian monastery at Roermond. A mystical writer akin to John of Ruysbroeck, and the perpetually subversive Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, interest in whom had been reawakened in the 15th century by the French theologian Jean Gerson after the Council of Konstanz. Denys was an unrelenting enemy of Islam, and the Turkish threat, and an admirer of Aquinas. He was considered the last important 'Schoolman' whose work has been considered a summation of the entire Scholastic output of the Middle Ages. His output of summaries, theological treatises, and translations are so many (they run to 41 volumes) it begs the question is the work attributed to him really all by him? It was said he only had three hour's sleep a night, and much of his work the not very creative recapitulation of others, nevertheless he still found time to go on a crusade, supervise the building of a monastery at Bois-le-Duc, and take responsibility for the administration of Roermond. Petrus Christus painted a Carthusian c1446, shortly after the artist purchased his citizenship of Bruges in 1444. The painting is one of the few examples of portraits of a cleric or lay brother from the 15th century, its illusionistic interior being a first. Also see chapter 1 for Denis – *The 'third eye' of the artist*. (In the context of this chapter, note the *Last Judgement* by Petrus, now in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, a simplified rendition derived from Van Eyck.)
- 122 The popularity of *Dialogue on the Particular Judgement of God* attributed to Denys has been considered a source for both Dieric Bouts and Bosch during the artist's lifetime, alongside Marmion's illustrations

- in 1474 for the *Visions of Tondal* by Albert Châtelet, Walter Gibson, and Larry Silver among others. For spiritual emergencies see later in this chapter.
- 123 Regarding the Van Eyck diptych or the wings of a triptych, the debate goes on. *The Way to Calvary* or the *Resurrection* have been suggested as possible centrepieces flanked by these two peaks of Christ's existence: the *Crucifixion* and the *Last Judgement*. However, a 1416 inventory of Jean, duc de Berry, lists a two-part painting of a *Passion* and a *Last Judgement* in an intimate devotional confrontation that was not unusual at the time. It has been variously dated from between 1413 and the 1430s. The original frames and the overall size (56.9x19.7cm) support the diminutive diptych theory, along with the texts that augment the imagery reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts such as the *Turin-Milan Hours* for which Van Eyck possibly contributed images. *The Archangel Michael*, a detailed pen drawing executed over a preliminary design in silverpoint, now in the British Museum, and a more elaborate engraved copy of the drawing in Dresden, were linked to the lost Van Eyck composition for a *St Michael altarpiece* by Friedrich Winkler 'Ein unbeachtetes eyckisches Werk' *Edwin Redslob zum 70. Geburtstag. Eine Festgabe* Geirg Rohde & Ottfried Neubecker (eds) 1955 pp90-95, something Fritz Koreny elaborated on in his doctoral thesis *Über die Anfänge der Reproduktionsgrafik nördlich der Alpen*, and again made reference to in *Alt-niederländische Zeichnungen: von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch* 2002 where he links the occupants of Hell and the figure of God in the Metropolitan *Last Judgement* panel to the Ghent altarpiece. Gerard David and his workshop produced a *St Michael altarpiece* (now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna) with a central panel derived from the lost Van Eyck prototype.
- 124 Till-Holger Borchert *Van Eyck to Dürer* 2010 p130. The painting after Dieric Bouts c1480-90 is in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek in Munich. By way of example, also note Stefan Lochner's first major work c1435, an altarpiece of the *Last Judgement*, that emulates the Ghent altarpiece, the influence of Van Eyck and Bouts being synthesised into the work of a number of German contemporaries.
- 125 Craig Harbison 'Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting' *Simiolus* 15, 1985 pp 87-118 p95. James Marrow pointed out the emphasis in contemporary texts on how art was to be experienced, and the responses they might elicit ahead of any focus on the pictured event 'Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance' *Simiolus* 16, 1986 pp150-69
- 126 Augustine *City of God* Book 20 ch 27, Gospel According to St Matthew 13:43 quoted in Augustine Book 20 ch1. Matthew 13:42-43 "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
- 127 Inclusion of the Deësis was common but never standard. The attribution of the Joos van Cleve *Last Judgement* in the Metropolitan is questionable. A similarly Italianate composition is Bernaert van Orley's *Last Judgement and the Seven Works of Mercy* from 1525, commissioned by the Almoners of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp in 1518, now in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp.
- 128 Joos van Cleve and collaborator *The Last Judgement* c1520-25 oil on panel 123.8x86.4cm Metropolitan Museum, New York
- 129 Painted 1443-51, unsigned (Rogier left no signed pictures) the vast, not authenticated but securely attributed to Van der Weyden and his assistants, the quote is from Lorne Campbell's essay 'The New Pictorial Language of Rogier van der Weyden' *Rogier van der Weyden 1400-1464 Master of Passions* Lorne Campbell & Jan Van der Stock (eds) 2009 p55
- 130 Larry Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 pp87-88 the comment was made with regards *The Garden of Earthly Delights* but serves equally well as a general comment, reflecting Silver's regard for Memling. He continues: "Moreover, continuities of space across the horizon link separate events over time, and Memling's model works well for Bosch's own connections between the Paradise panel and the populous central Garden."
- 131 *Lucas Cranach Flügelaltar mit dem Jüngsten Gericht* c1524 163x125cm, outer shutters 163x58cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Friedländer says c1520. *Lucas Cranach* 1978 p89.
- 132 Even Jan van Eyck: the will of a Genoese resident of Bruges, Anselme Adorno, in 1470 bequeathed both his daughters a painting of St Francis. See J J Van Asperen de Boer et al *Jan van Eyck: Two paintings of St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* 1997. Rogier van der Weyden was renowned across western Europe in his own lifetime, during which he trained two generations of apprentices and collaborators, managed a well-organised workshop, even lured foreigners like Memling to work there, and met the expectations of his clients 'anxious to engage in the image-focused meditation advocated by the *Devotio Moderna*'. He met the demands of the market. Not surprisingly, his heirs reused the repertoire. *The Triptych with the Descent from the Cross and Donors' Portraits (Edelheere Triptych)* was, for example, copied during his lifetime c1441-43. The most intensive period of copying was immediately after his death from 1464 to 1514 when his direct descendants ran the workshop. Marcellus Coffermans was producing copies throughout the 16th century. See Marc Rudolf de Vrij *Marcellus Coffermans* 2003
- 133 For the methods see Jellie Dijkstra *Origineel en kopie. Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flémalle en Rogier van der Weyden* dissertation 1990 pp69-77 and 'Methods for Copying of Paintings in the Southern Netherlands in the 15th and Early 16th Centuries' *Le Dessin sous-jacent et pratiques d'atelier. Le dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture* Colloque VIII 8-10, September 1989 Roger Van Schoute & Hélène Verougstraete-Marcq (eds) 1991 pp67-75. For the definition of terms see Hélène Mund 'Approche d'une terminologie relative à l'étude de la copie' *Annales d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie* 1983 pp19-31
- 134 Jellie Dijkstra identified five paintings from one series that were all made from the same tracings and amount to series production *Origineel en kopie. Een onderzoek naar de navolging van de Meester van Flémalle en Rogier van der Weyden* dissertation 1990 pp123-130. Dirk De Vos subdivided numerous paintings of the *Virgin and Child* into groups comprising dozens of paintings from five models 'De Madonna-en-Kindtypologie bij Rogier van der Weyden en enkele minder gekende flemalleske voorlopers' *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 13, 1971 pp60-161, especially 139-140, pp146-7
- 135 Berthold Hinz *Cranach et son Temps* Musée du Luxembourg 2011 pp49-53
- 136 *ibid.* Note that Hinz here refers to 'purgatory' in a Last Judgement.
- 137 Unlike his Grandfather Jan, and his Uncle Jan, Jheronimus Bosch never received the honour of becoming a master. Hence he would never have had apprentices, only assistants. Van Dijk 'Jheronimus Bosch inspired by People in his Environment: Research from the archival Sources' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources*. De Bruyn and Koldewey (eds) 2010 pp112-122
- 138 and modern, a skinny model, her body manipulated into an idealised body from a fashion magazine of today. Painted in 1532, now in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Main.
- 139 compare Cranach's 1530 portrait with that of Bernaert Van Orley in 1518 to see that jaw miraculously disappear.
- 140 See the last photo shoot of Monroe by Bert Stern at the Bel Air Hotel, September 1962. Stern *The Last Sitting* 1982
- 141 *The Beheading of St John the Baptist* 1515, *Salome* 1530, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* c1530, *Salome with the Head of St John the Baptist* c1530s, *The Feast of Herod* 1533, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes and a Servant* etc.
- 142 there are at least 28 Cranach paintings of *Lucretia* – Cranach Digital Archive (director: Gunnar Heydenreich) lucascranach.org
- 143 Joseph Koerner, writing at length about the *Wittenberg Altarpiece* 1547, notes St Augustine "extolled a low style for 'instruction and

- exegesis' – precisely the jobs that Reformation art was engineered to do." *The Reformation of the Image* 2004
- 144 *The Holy Kinship or The Torgau Altarpiece* 1509 (?) oil and tempera on limewood; side panels 120.6x45.3cm, centre panel 121x100.4cm Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Main – commissioned by Frederick the Wise, perhaps as a symbol of reconciliation with the Holy Roman Emperor, it was certainly political.
- 145 Eduard Flechsig suggested 1525 at the earliest, even that it might be by Lucas the Elder's first son Hans. *Cranachstudien* 1900, quoted by Max J Friedländer and Jacob Rosenberg *The Paintings of Lucas Cranach* (revised edition) 1978 p90.
- 146 *The Last Judgement* (fragment) oil on panel 60x114cm Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich
- 147 Assuming that this fragment came from the lower right of the central panel of a triptych, in 2006 Vandenbroeck and Zalama *Filips de Schone. De schoonheid en de waanzin* Bruges catalogue, picked up on an earlier idea of Carl Linfert *Hieronymus Bosch* 1972, that the stretch of puffed up clothing in the lower left hand corner may be the end of something worn by a tall figure, most probably the Archangel Michael who was busily weighing souls on his scales, making it comparable to the much larger Beane *Last Judgement* by Van der Weyden – if only in terms of its size.
- 148 Erté, Romain de Tiroff (1892-1990)
- 149 Gibson *Hieronymus Bosch* 1973 p68
- 150 For example De Tolnay p364: "The devil seen from the rear, right, and the monster below him are both anticipated in the sheet of sketches with monsters in Oxford."
- 151 Dendrochronological dating puts it around 1442-8, a few years before the birth of Bosch. The chronological impossibility of this means the artist, if it was Bosch, might well have used an old panel, thus rendering dendrochronology pointless. A caption alongside Vandenbroeck suggests c1500-1525 'Hieronymus Bosch: the wisdom of the riddle' *Hieronymus Bosch* Koldewij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet (eds) 2001 p190. In 1980 Unverfehrt advocated 1515-1520.
- 152 Paul Vandenbroeck 'Hieronymus Bosch: the wisdom of the riddle' *Hieronymus Bosch* 2001 p190
- 153 Gert Unverfehrt *Hieronymus Bosch: Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* 1980 p164. It is certainly more atypical than the Bruges triptych that typologically sits more comfortably within the oeuvre of Bosch.
- 154 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1937 and 1965 transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p34
- 155 Carl Linfert *Bosch* 2003 p33
- 156 *ibid* p33
- 157 *ibid* p112. Linfert – the picture had a "cool majesty only comparable with that of Rogier's altarpiece in Beane"
- 158 *The Last Judgement* 99.5x60.5cm, outer shutters *Christ Crowned with Thorns* 99.5x28.7cm Groeningemuseum, Bruges
- 159 Reindert Falkenburg 2011 p255 picked up on Wirth 2000 pp90-96
- 160 which is something of a conundrum. Whereas the earliest felling date according to Peter Klein is 1478, see *Hieronymus Bosch New Insights Into His Life and Work* Koldewij, Vermet and Van Kooij (eds) p124; see also Frédéric Elsig *ibid* p96, and Paul Vandenbroeck 'Hieronymus Bosch: the wisdom of the riddle' *Hieronymus Bosch* 2001 p180.
- 161 High resolution and infrared photography by Adri Verburg in Middelburg, see Jos Koldewij '... A Man like Bosch...' *Jheronimus Bosch – His Sources* 2010 pp25-26
- 162 The collective title of James Baldwin's essays from 1963 *The Fire Next Time* came from a spiritual *Mary Don't You Weep*. The line "God gave Noah the rainbow sign, / No more water, the fire next time" is based on scripture.
- 163 *The Flood* 69x38cm and *Hell* 69x36cm Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Disagreements as to the content of these panels are matched by the variety of titles attributed to them: *Hell* or *The Wicked World* or *The World before the Flood*, or *Devastation by Fire*
- 164 Genesis 5:31-6:1, 6:5-7, 6:17.
- 165 In preparation, one Count von Iggleheim built a three-storey ark. He was only the most extreme of those who built boats or fled to high ground. The momentum that built up on the back of these predictions was unprecedented: "nearly sixty authors wrote over 160 treatises" commenting on the forecasts in the 1499 *Almanach nova* according to Dixon *Bosch* 2003 pp298-299, commenting that Dürer was "so unnerved by the predictions that he dreamed of its coming, recording his nightmare in his diary". Jan Huibers of Dordrecht launched a 2700 tonne reconstruction of Noah's ark in 2011, measuring 300x50x30 cubits based on a cubit measuring the distance between finger tips and elbow, in his case approximately 45cm.
- 166 It has been suggested that it was as early as 1510 that Copernicus confided in Tiedemann Giese his secret knowledge of the cosmos, and that on a manuscript of just six leaves he set out his challenge to Ptolemy's Earth-centred astronomy c150AD, including the Sun-centred conclusions of his own calculations. He would dare to 'shove the lamp of Heaven' into a Hell-hole at the centre of the universe. But a reluctance to publish never left him, his six volume *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* appearing after his death in 1543.
- 167 Interpretation of the hovering demonic figures as the Fall of the Rebel Angels is widespread from Bax onwards.
- 168 RH Marijnissen and P Ruyffelaere *Bosch* 1987 & 2007 p295
- 169 The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 24:37 and Luke 17:26-27 were both considered the possible inspiration by Fraenger in 1950, but he then confuses his argument with reference to the imagined life of one Jacob van Almgangien.
- 170 See Jos Koldewij 'Hieronymus Bosch and his City' *Hieronymus Bosch: the complete paintings and drawings* Koldewij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet (eds) 2001 pp70-77 for discussion of the hypothetical reconstruction of an altarpiece for the Confraternity of Our Lady where *St John the Evangelist* at *Patmos* would face *John the Baptist* in the *Wilderness* from Madrid, in which the two paintings formed wings, and the Baptist would also be painted on the reverse like its Berlin counterpart. (Just like the Berlin painting, we can tell that the panel has been split.) Baldass had put forward the hypothesis in 1943. The discovery of a donor subsequently painted out led to various theories, however, the iconography is the basis on which the two Johns have been proposed as facing wings of a part carved (Adriaen van Wesel), part painted, polyptych. Too distant to see properly on such a large work, the theory can be substantiated by an artist wishing to make an impression upon and/or a gesture towards the Brotherhood of which he had only recently become a member. It is also the first, or perhaps only, example of Bosch at work with his Doppelgänger, the 'Hay Wain Master' as dubbed by Fritz Koreny 'Überlegungen zu Stil und Chronologie. Prolegomena zu einer Sichtung des Oeuvres' *Jahrbuch des kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4/5 2002-3 p58. In 1975, Gerlach saw the missing central panel as the Brussels *Crucifixion*. This must also be considered highly unlikely. However, the extremely fine quality of both Berlin and Madrid panels could also suggest a smaller, more conventional three-panel work than the highly elaborate reconstruction put forward by Koldewij.
- 171 As Dixon points out *Bosch* 2003 p298, if he went to Venice, Bosch would have seen the set of 11th century mosaics in the atrium of St Mark's devoted to the story of Noah, starting with the old man in an advanced state of intoxication, but "drunk by the judgement of the fathers was not guilty of sin" according to the Douay-Rheims commentary.
- 172 Genesis 7:23-4 "And he destroyed all the substance that was upon the earth, from man even to beast, and the creeping things and fowls

of the air: and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noe only remained, and the that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.”

- 173 As previously noted Matthew 24:37-9, also II Peter 3:5-7 “For this they are wilfully ignorant of, that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, consisting by the word of God. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of the ungodly men.”
- 174 Revelations 8:7-10 “And the first angel sounded the trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and it was cast on the earth, and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded the trumpet: and as it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood: And the third part of those creatures died, which had life in the sea, and the third part of the ships was destroyed. And the third angel sounded the trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, burning as it were a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters”; 6:15 “And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman, and ever freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of mountains”
- 175 Walter Gibson *Hieronymus Bosch* 1973 p108
- 176 Wie sind wir wandermüde / Ist dies etwa der Tod? How weary we are of wandering / Could this then be death? – the words of the German poet Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff that Richard Strauss used for the *Vier letzte Lieder* (Four Last Songs) was taken from the last line of *Im Abendrot* (At Sunset).
- 177 The last ambiguous line of *A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London*. Whether it is a pledge of eternal life or a realisation that death is death is unclear. It might be compared to *Do not go gentle into that good night*, a poem written by Thomas in anticipation of death and an exhortation to affirm life in dying.
- 178 Sometimes known as *Visions of the Afterlife*. In 2011 in Venice, at their new home, Palazzo Grimani, the panels were entitled *Visione dell'Aldilà*. There are four panels painted in oil, possibly originally wings of a triptych that depict an *Earthly Paradise*, or the *Garden of Eden* (88.5x41.5cm), the *Ascent of the Blessed*, variously referred to as *Ascent to Heaven* or *Ascent to the Empyrean*, (88.5x41.5cm), the *Fall of the Damned* (88x44cm) and *Hell* (88x44cm), all of which have been dated c1500-1503. Vittorio Sgarbi, the Renaissance art critic and former politician found guilty of aggravated fraud, was appointed to the superintendency of the Venice State Museum system in 2010. The appointment caused an outcry. However, thanks to his dynamic personality and continued influence in the corridors of power, his initiatives at the Grimani have been “entirely positive” according to the mayor of the city, Giorgio Orsoni; this, despite his stunt with a porn star at the re-opening of the palazzo when three Giorgiones were displayed, prior to the three Bosch polyptychs arriving from their former home, hidden away in the Palazzo Ducale, and going on show, together with works by Veronese.
- 179 With the launch of the Hadron Collider and a more modest study called the AWARE project, science in 2008 was endeavouring to answer questions regarding the beginning and the end of life more usually reserved for philosophical and theological debate. Biologically speaking there is no moment of death; death is a process. The question therefore arises, what is the relationship between the mind and the brain during death? By monitoring the brain, a study by the University of Southampton in the UK attempted to determine what many scientists hitherto considered an impossibility – that the mind and consciousness continue functioning after the point of death and the brain has shut down. Controversial as such a proposal may be, studies have consistently shown between 10 and 20% of those people revived back to life have claimed that they had lucid, structured thoughts, that they could ‘see’ and ‘hear’ actual events. As to the sensational possibility being investigated in September 2011 that particles may travel faster than the speed of light, with all the implications for time travel, life and death, we await further research to know if Einstein can relax. At the time of writing E still equals mc². Probably.
- 180 Raymond Moody *Life After Life* 1975 pp21-3. The dramatic impact of this book relied on a compilation of accounts from people who had come close to death and lived to tell the tale. The similarity of their experiences led Moody to construct a composite account of someone who hears themselves pronounced dead, then a loud ringing or buzzing, and subsequently feel themselves moving rapidly through a long, dark tunnel. This is followed by finding themselves apparently outside their physical body, and from this vantage point watching attempts at their resuscitation, being visited by the spirits of dead relatives, before ‘a being of light appears before them’ that demands they evaluate their lives as a panoramic instantaneous playback of major events sweeps past. At which point they approach the frontier between this life and the next, only to be turned back. Their time has not yet come and despite their resistance and attempts to continue their journey into the afterlife, they are reunited with their physical selves and come back to life. Criticised as the product of western peoples’ expectations, Moody claimed the experiences were cross-cultural. Carol Zaleski *Otherworld Journeys* 1987 describes the medieval parallels that showed Heaven as a distant country, with time travellers always going first to a Hell, apparently located ‘up there’. The dualistic parting of body and soul is common to the stories recounted in both books, with the spirit hovering over contemplation of one’s life on earth with complete detachment as individuals bring judgement on themselves. Covering off another angle of potential controversy, Melvin Morse *Closer to the Light* 1990 wrote of the near-death experiences of children that replicated those of educated adults. The consistency of the stories related in these and other books challenges us to consider whether we do indeed have a spirit or a soul that survives death or if we have brains that die in similar ways. In a religious context, we might also note St Paul, stunned and blinded by the light for three days, after which his life was totally transformed (see Acts of the Apostles chapter 9), and lastly TS Eliot *Little Gidding* from the *Four Quartets* “We are born with the dead” suggesting that each passing life turns the soul back to its beginning.
- 181 Jean van Ruysbroeck or Ruusbroec (1293-1381) an Augustinian prior from Groenendaal in Brabant, “the most articulate Trinitarian mystic of the Church” according to Louis Dupré, presents “the mystical union between God and man as so intimate that it always remains a unity of persons, not an identity of nature.” *The Spiritual Espousals* are three books setting out ways of Christian living: the active life, the interior life, and the contemplative life, the overall leitmotiv taken from Matthew 25:6, the parable of the ten virgins and of the talents – “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him” that includes a description of the Last Judgement 25:46 “... And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into everlasting life.” Ruysbroeck discusses Christ as bridegroom, in the past through the Incarnation, in the present in our daily lives, and in the future at the Last Judgement, a point of reference for *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (see chapter 4). “Human nature is the bride”, see the Prologue. One of the many commentaries on Ruysbroeck was written by Albert Deblaere who also addressed religious questions with reference to Pieter Bruegel the Elder (see chapter 6). John Ruusbroec: *The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works* introduced and transl James A Wiseman 1985.
- 182 One possibility put forward is Alart Duhamel’s engraving of a *Last Judgement* 23.7x34.3cm that is presumed to be taken from a lost painting by Jheronimus Bosch. An example is in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett
- 183 Larry Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p350
- 184 Patrik Reuterswärd ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s four Afterlife panels in Venice’ *Artibus et Historiae* vol12 no24 1991, a piece written in memory of Jan Bialostocki, places the order with the tunnel of light on the right as “it would appear to offer man a note of hope”.
- 185 “And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.”

- 186 Paul Vandenbroeck *Hieronymus Bosch* 2001 p174. It must be admitted that various questions as to the layout, design, and production of this book leaves a doubt as to whether Vandenbroeck either proposed or endorsed this configuration of paintings.
- 187 J Chailley 'Jérôme Bosch et ses symbols. Essai de décryptage' *Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des Beaux-Arts* 1978
- 188 Barbara Ehrenreich *Living With a Wild God* 2014 describes how once, as a teenager "the world flamed into life. There were no visions, no prophetic voices or visits by totemic animals, just this blazing everywhere. Something poured into me, and I poured out into it." An autobiographical metaphysical thriller the book sets out the cultural history of such phenomena from the Bible to Aldous Huxley, alongside the scientific background. An atheist and a sceptic, Ehrenreich describes a startling moment when "something peeled off the visible world, taking with it all meaning, inference, association, labels and words."
- 189 In 1521 Mercantonio Michiel wrote in his diary about three paintings he had seen in Venice at Cardinal Grimani's palace. There was a "a canvas representing Hell" a "canvas representing dreams" and "a canvas representing Fortune". The reference to canvases rather than wood is interesting. Canvases or not, Michiel is one of the first to make reference to dreams with regards Bosch. With reference to a 15th century exorcism manual, Walter Gibson points to the belief that being "forever denied the sight of God" was considered the most painful of all tortures, something Michiel may have misinterpreted as a remorseful soul generating dreams of monsters. In referring to Bruegel, in 1572 Dominicus Lampsonius wrote of "his master's ingenious dreams [*ingeniosa magistri somnia*]" and in 1584, Lomazzo wrote that Bosch's "representation of apparitions and extraordinary and horrible dreams was unique and truly divine". See 'Bosch's Dreams: A Response to the Art of Bosch in the Sixteenth Century' *The Art Bulletin* 1992 vol 74/2 pp205-218. Armies of Boschian devils by contemporaries and imitators led to the possibility his original demonic art being interpreted as the product of actual dreams. Books of dreams, condemned by Sebastian Brant in *Narrenschiff*, were published in the 16th century, a fact De Tolnay refers to with regards certain details of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. An anonymous *Vision of Tundale* in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid c1520 shows a sleeping Tondal in one corner experiencing the admonitory nightmare, depicted as a phantasmagoric panorama with figures derived from Bosch.
- 190 *ibid* p206
- 191 Marco Boschini *Le minere della pittura* 1664 pp23-4 see Bernard Aikema 'Hieronymus Bosch and Italy?' *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights Into His Life and Work* Koldeweij, Vermet and Van Kooij (eds) 2001 p26
- 192 Jean Michel Massing 'Sicut erat in diebus Antonii: The devils under the bridge in the Tribulations of St Antony by Hieronymus Bosch in Lisbon' *Sight and Insight. Essays on Art and Criticism in Honour of EH Gombrich at 85* John Onians (ed) 1994 pp108-127
- 193 This was one of the questions addressed at the 55th Missouri Conference on History 2013 *One's Place in the World: Mapping and Space in Medieval Thought*
- 194 see chapter 8
- 195 James AW Heffernan *Museum of Words. The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* 2004, gives the extreme example of a Fuseli exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1818 entitled *Dante, in his descent to hell, discovers amidst the flights of hapless lovers whirled about in a hurricane, the forms of Paolo and Francesca of Rimini; obtains Virgil's permission to address them, and being informed of the dreadful blow that sent them to that place of torment once, overcome by pity and terror, drops like a lifeless corpse upon the rocks*. Heffernan also draws attention to the Magritte parody, emblazoned at the foot of his painting *Ceci n'est pas un pipe*.
- 196 *ibid* p304
- 197 Calvin S Hall and Gardner Lindzey *Theories of Personality* 1957 p80
- 198 Carl Jung *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 2nd ed transl RFC Hull 1969 p7
- 199 Jung saw all religions as myths, something influenced by his views on psychoanalysis. According to Viktor von Weizsaecker "CG Jung was the first to understand that psychoanalysis belonged in the sphere of religion" See 'Reminiscences of Freud and Jung' from *Freud and the Twentieth Century* B Nelson (ed) 1957 p72. 'The dark side of God' was a lifelong preoccupation of Jung. An emotional and theoretical struggle with the core nature of the deity is evident from Jung's earliest fantasies and dreams. Following his own brush with villainy this became stirred up by the reality of Good and Evil, and coated with the inhumanity and insanity that he had witnessed, as his concerns with the 'sufferings of the just' manifested themselves in his *tour de force* of the unconscious, *Answer to Job*, where he casts an extremely critical eye on the Old Testament Yahweh and set out views on both God and politics.
- 200 *Heaven and Earth* was the title of a Kiefer exhibition at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2005-6. The curator, Michael Auping, was criticised by Frances Colpitt in the March edition of *Art in America*, for his "interpretive quibbles" in accepting "Kiefer's invitation to make symbolic equations that ignore Panofsky's advice on iconography: If the knife that enables us to identify a St Bartholomew is not a knife but a cork-screw, the figure is not a St Bartholomew". At the time of his previous major exhibition in the United States, 1987 at the Art Institute of Chicago, Kiefer was recognised by Robert Hughes as "the best painter of his generation on either side of the Atlantic". Peter Schjeldal observed the "hedged awe" that greeted the work, something he termed "Anselm Angst". Meanwhile Arthur Danto *The Nation* pp26-28 2 January 1989, went so far as to accuse Kiefer of wallowing in Wagnerian cultism... "a heavy-handed compost of shallow ideas and foggy beliefs" missing completely the fact that Kiefer was not one of those subscribing to the view that the violent myths of blood and soil could be safely pigeonholed as peculiarly Nazi.
- 201 *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Abbeville Press p11
- 202 According to Germano Celant, celebrity curator and the Richelieu of contemporary art in Italy, "It's medieval. All these different villages, city against city, museum against museum". He was talking to the *New York Times* in March 2008 about the Maxxi in Rome, the Mambo in Bologna, the Madre in Naples, the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, the Castello di Rivoli in Turin, and, of course, the Gargosian in Rome.
- 203 See www.hangarbicocca.it
- 204 The reference to Caspar David Friedrich *Traveller Looking Over a Sea of Fog* went unnoticed, the parody of Nazi as Canute was lost on many, particularly and inevitably, Americans; and as Simon Schama pointed out in *Landscape and Memory* 1995 p123 the strategy of forcing consideration of the "culturally acceptable elements of the German heroic and mythic tradition with its unacceptable historical consequences" too provocative and threatening. The loaded content of the work, embracing meditations on the Holocaust and the mysteries of creativity proved uncomfortable – as it should.
- 205 Holland Cotter 'Summer in Washington, Where Image Is All' *New York Times* 21 July 2006
- 206 Whereas Daniel Arasse has pointed out that Kiefer's work is an act of remembrance with no basis in memory.
- 207 Monumenta 2007, Paris *Anselm Kiefer: the matter of history*
- 208 Michael Auping *Heaven and Earth* p50 Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 2005/6
- 209 The seemingly obligatory Venetian awards controversy arose in 1997 when an Italian art historian, Maurizio Calvesi, quit the jury because Kiefer's work at the Correr was not given a prize.
- 210 Kiefer discovered texts on alchemy and the Cabala in the 1980s. This led to the suggestive symbolism of materials becoming important: particularly a belief that lead embodies memory. He had used lead

- as a ground for the paintings and later for shaping giant books and library installations, working like a medieval alchemist to combine and transform his materials. Symbolic and without colour, lead suits Kiefer who does not believe in absolutes. The truth is always grey. "When Kiefer lays it on with a trowel, we're not talking metaphors." JJ Charlesworth *Time Out* 2 February 2007.
- 211 On orders from the Allies they salvaged material becoming mythical heroes in the process, especially in the DDR. They symbolise the human effort to rebuild and go on. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the blasted, ruined landscape of the set "is as much a symbol of the hope for rebirth as it is a metaphor for cultural nihilism" Tom Service *Guardian* 10 July 2009
- 212 Douay-Rheims – Isaiah 21:4 "My heart failed, darkness amazed me: Babylon my beloved is become a wonder to me" After visiting the Holy Land in 1984 his work began to draw extensively from Old Testament sources.
- 213 As a student, Kiefer had become interested in the dilemmas posed by the ideas of the theological and legal intellectual Carl Schmitt whose work explored the inherent tension between the concepts of free will, authoritarianism and spirituality "because they got caught between the power of government and the power of God". Quoted by Auping *Heaven and Earth* catalogue p28.
- 214 Theodor Adorno threw up the challenge to all postwar artists: "After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric"
- 215 For the first time in eight years Kiefer exhibited in New York in 2010. "He knows how to put on a show" was the *New York Times* verdict, that Roberta Smith categorized as "effective middlebrow art as catharsis, spectacle with a message" and likened it to a Broadway show, "we leave feeling that our heartstrings have been exercised or at least manipulated. We've been through the ringer, and it was awesome." *New York Times* 18 November 2010
- 216 Piero Camporesi *The Fear of Hell. Images of Damnation & Salvation in Early Modern Europe* transl Lucinda Byatt 1991
- 217 H A Kelly 'The Devil at Large' *The Journal of Religion* vol 67/4 October 1987 pp518-528 a review of four books by Jeffrey Russell Burton published by Cornell
- 218 Picasso reputedly once told Françoise Gilot, "Of course if you note all the different shapes, sizes and colours of models you work from, you can understand his confusion. He doesn't know what he wants. No wonder his style is so ambiguous. It's like God's. God is really only another artist. He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the cat. He has no real style. He just keeps trying other things. The same with this sculptor. First he works from nature; then he tries abstraction. Finally he winds up lying around caressing his models." So talented, so daring he believed he could reinvent the universe, Picasso went further; he once told a friend: "I am God. I am God. I am God."
- 219 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15:22 "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive"
- 220 Bosch made the exteriors of his triptychs more powerful by extending the image across the split between the doors, in the case of *The Prado Epiphany* even over the moulding, introducing some colour variation into the standard grisaille, making them fully pictorial as opposed to visually sculptural, exploiting the techniques of manuscript illustrators to enhance their quality, and making them more visually dynamic in some cases by introducing a roundel. With *The Garden of Earthly Delights* the overall narrative becomes continuous, inside and out – and back again.
- 221 Lynn F Jacobs 'The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch' *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 31/4 Winter 2000 p1012
- 222 Patrik Reuterswärd *Hieronymus Bosch* 1970 p128
- 223 T M Luhmann *When God Talks Back. Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship With God* 2013
- 224 Luhmann has compared the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius to Rick Warren's 'Purpose Driven Life' – a 'folksy, spiritualized manual for cognitive behavioral therapy' – training the religious imagination. "Evangelical prayer..." is from Molly Worthen 'A Great Awakening' *New York Times* 27 April 2013
- 225 In America this is nothing new. The diaries of the Puritans were crammed with self-interrogation and supplication, evidence of their speaking directly to God and hearing His voice in their private thoughts once they landed.
- 226 Peter Bruegel *The Last Judgement* 1558 pen and brown-black ink, contours indented for transfer 22.9x30cm, Albertina, Vienna. Drawn in reverse for Pieter van der Heyden to engrave a plate for Hieronymus Cock in 1558, a print of which 22.5x29.4cm is in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

4

The Struggle for Faith

Through the Looking Glass of History

Encyclopaedia of Sin: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

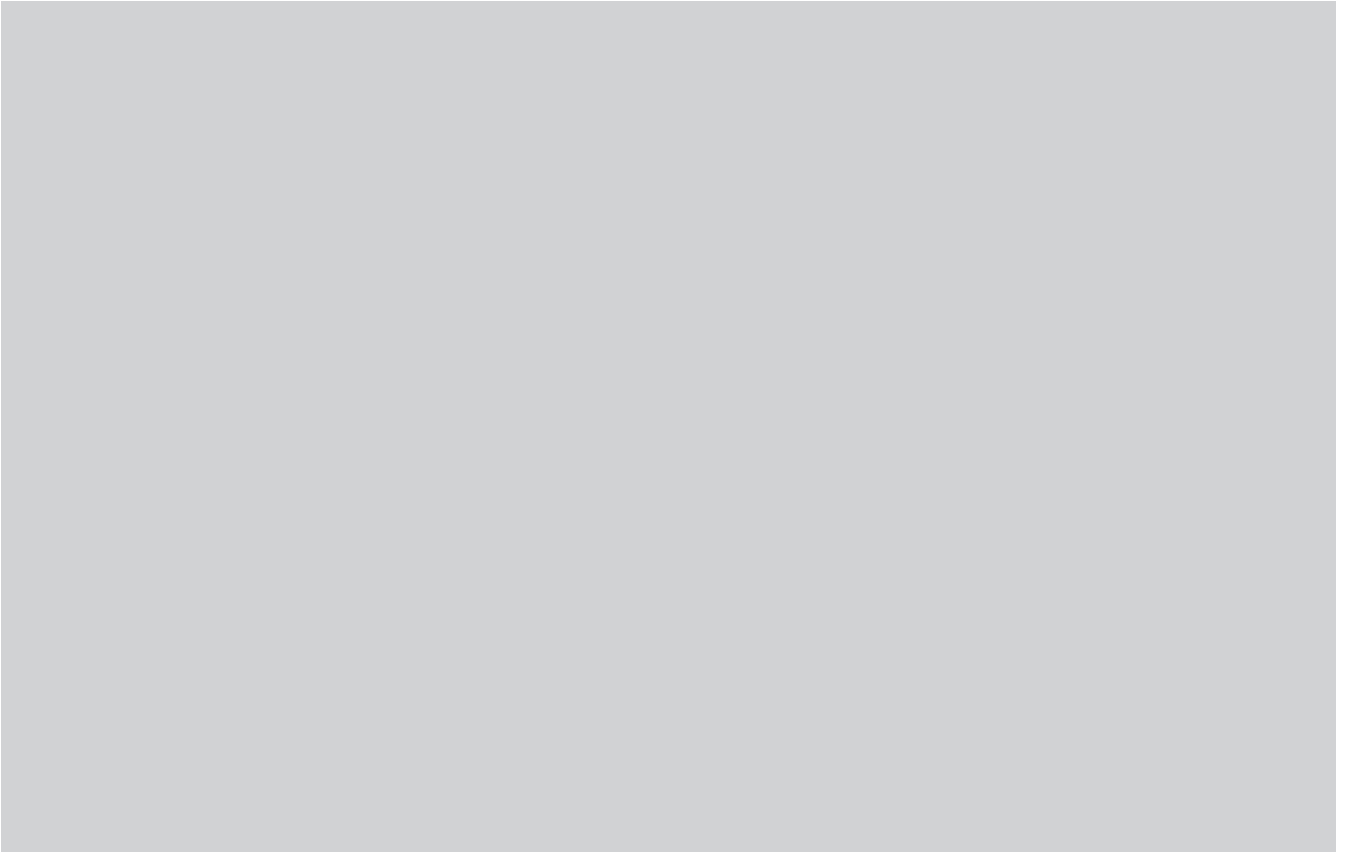
Entr'acte Francis Bacon

A Man Alone: *The Tribulations of St Antony*

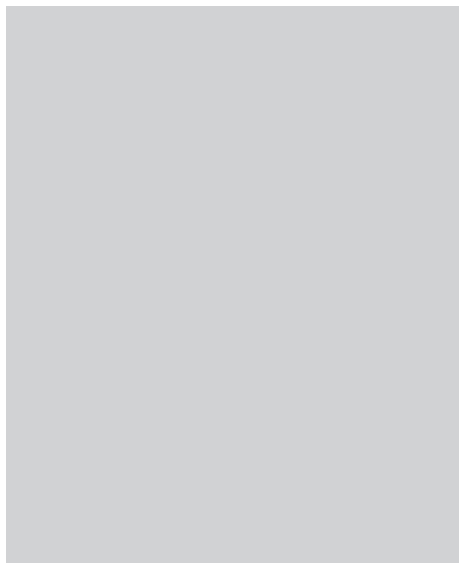
Entr'acte Bill Viola

Foreign Affairs – a Roman Holiday

The world according to Bosch – encounters with God



93, 94 Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, Room 56A – the lucky few get to see *The Creation of the World*



Through the Looking Glass of History

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" L P Hartley¹

I AM STANDING in a familiar place, Room 56A at the Prado in Madrid. I arrive early, and after a while the security guard allows me to sit on her chair as I make notes. The room fills up. *The Triumph of Death* faces *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and off to one side, Charon carries the souls of medieval Christendom across the Styx to face their greatest choice. They all make art out of telling stories, these *tableaux vivants* in the grand theatrical manner, staged for dramatic effect exploring the boundaries between reality and fiction, a rich mixture of faith, reportage, and fantasy. As with all stories their power lies in being believable to their original audiences, and in this case, testify to the force of history, but inevitably, what that history signified or promised is open to interpretation.

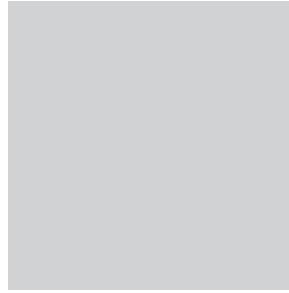
"Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past."² Lost somewhere between a world where today's viewers have little sense of belonging to what has been, and their original audience was turning to worlds yet to come, these are landscapes of reprisal. The pictures are scary. Look at them for any length of time and you begin to understand how scary. Pictures of a world gone wrong, you might just smell the fear in which these images were generated. Few find the Bruegel comfortable viewing, they all gravitate to the other end of the room towards the best-known work by Bosch. There are no answers to be found there either, only more questions, and the doubts and fears of an apocalyptic tomorrow.

But then, faith is doubt, not certainty. How many of these visitors grasp that neither painting was intended as agreeable viewing? There is something in the air that eludes them. It is like being in a foreign country, where distinctions are in a sense much clearer and brighter, and yet in another sense strange and very hard to assess.

Can a painting ambush you from across a room? Paintings are, in essence, go-betweens, works that conjure places and release time and history across places of familiarity and those foreign to us. Individually and collectively, it is all a going-between, every time someone looks at the pictures. There is a combination of knowing and not-knowing as we stare at imagery of such timeless magnetism, conceived from one of the crossroads of history. Standing at that crossroads was Mercury, the god of communication, the god of artists, and god of the conduit between living and dead souls, surveying the world as it entered one of most hope-filled, change-filled, and progressive periods it had ever known. In attempting to release Bosch and Bruegel from this mercurial world is to enter a labyrinth, every bit as deep as Dante, a remote period of history that is complicated to untangle and difficult to make vivid.

If one of the definitions we have concerning art is that it serves its public by reflecting and explaining the world at a particular moment in history, then these are the work of desperate men. Certainly the pictures embody endurance, active endurance because they both engage with history, with past and perceived coming tragedies, desperate times from which people may choose to look away. But to engage with history demands hope. Faced with tragedy, the sense of need is deepened. As the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn used to tell it: "In Auschwitz you could even live without bread, though not for long; but you couldn't live a day without hope."

If there can be no art without history then there can be no history without images. These images in Room 56a are not mere snapshots from the past, but reports from the front line of a world living on the very edge of prophecy, communiqués that described the situation 'so truthfully that their readers could no longer evade it', images that could hold up the glass of conscience to their patrons.³ To look at them now is to spy on another country, as life is



95, 96, 97 Jheronimus Bosch: God considers his creation, *The Creation of the World* (detail); the 'bird of darkness' stares out from the centre of Paradise,



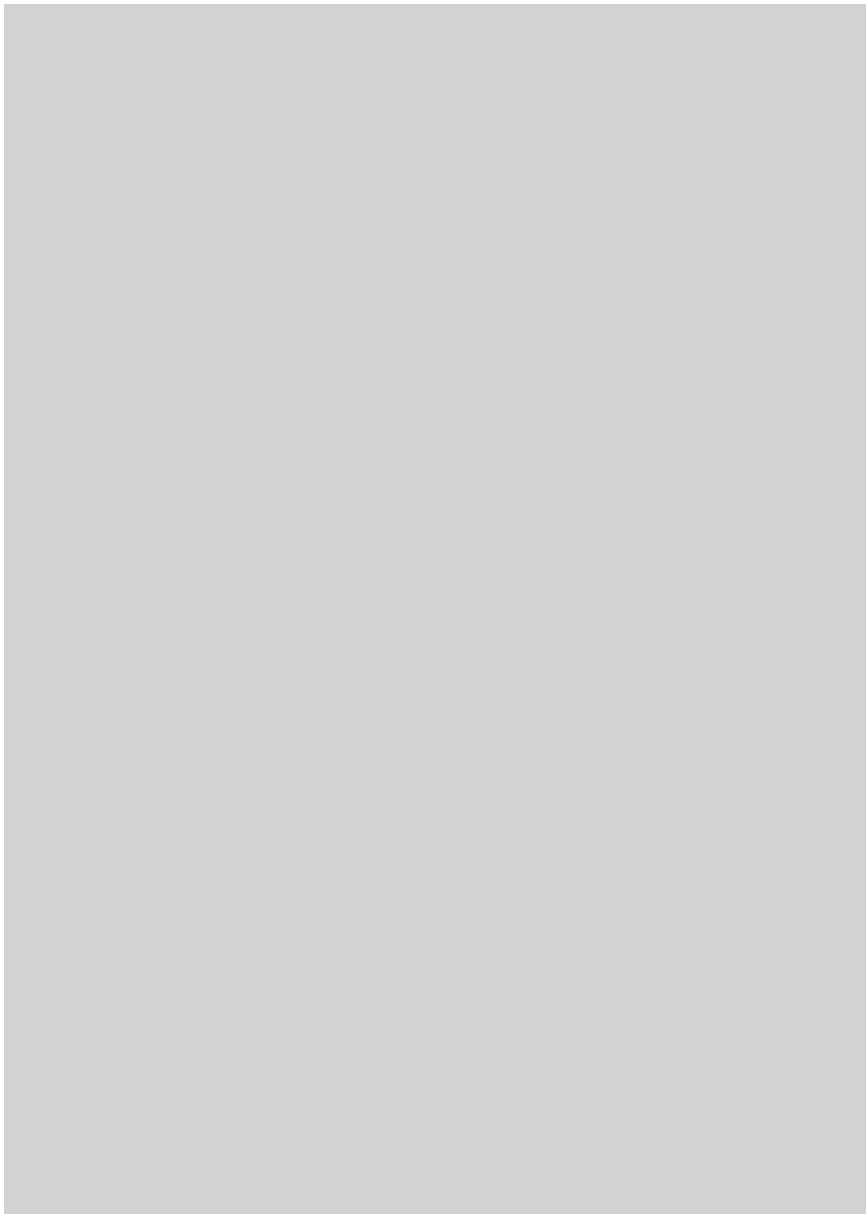
Paradise (detail); sinful mankind is oblivious to them both, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

paraded before us through a peephole from eternity. "As long as a man is affected by the image of anything, he regards the thing as present, although it may not exist, nor will he regard it as past or future save in so far as its image is connected with the image of time past or future."⁴

The present invented by their painters is as alive and inhabited as the lived present of the moment. Their stories are unfinished, because they involve sharing with their audience. We are encouraged by the artist's skill into a shared experience of the stories of other people's lives and we encounter the huge moral dilemmas they faced. We may see something of the complexity of our own lives as little different to the artist's imagination of a picture's natural and uncluttered plot. For them, their mysteries are not something to be solved but to be carried. They carry a clandestine continuity, stories handed down across the years, memories to be smuggled across the border into tomorrow.

Uncomfortable they may be at times, but they give us windows on the world, countries of the mind, and visions of the future and the world to come.

The visitors to the Prado usually miss the outer panels of the Bosch triptych.⁵ *The Garden* is at the far end and the reverse of the outer panels are difficult to see and frequently missed by visitors. What they miss is an image that reflects the artistic process, the startling presentation of a religious revelation, which is that the creator made creation creative.



98

*"There are things
known and
unknown, and in
between are...
The Doors"*

Jim Morrison

Encyclopaedia of Sin: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

"The confession of evil works is the beginning of good works" St Augustine

"Heaven doesn't want me, and Hell is afraid I'll take over" Bumper sticker in New York, 2008

DEATH MAY be an undiscovered country, but Bosch has peopled it for us. Whilst the inner wings of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* relate closely to the Vienna *Last Judgement*, this Garden is a last judgement without The Last Judgement; Paradise contrasts with Hell, and an earthly paradise has been substituted for Heaven, a Utopia untouched by the Fall, *Paradisum voluptatis*, a paradise of lust.⁶

José de Sigüenza had no doubt that *The Garden* "conveyed the same message as another work by Bosch in the Escorial, the *Haywain Triptych*".⁷ This raises the possibility that Bosch did, or intended, to paint seven lessons in morality, one for each of the deadly sins.⁸ Superficially demonstrating the pursuit of happiness, lust and greed are respectively portrayed with some enjoyment, but located in the centre of a triptych these two themes are inevitably vehicles for teaching and preaching as part of devotional exercises, the original sin and the consequences framing the sin itself. The hopes of Eden give way to sin and passion, both physical and material, resulting in the punishment of Hell.

Both worlds are far from their Last Judgement, moral parables that portray thousands of recurring incidents in an allegorical image that leads to the inevitable question, are these indeed paintings of a last judgement without The Last Judgement? Because even without the Last Judgement, man is being brought to judgement. It certainly is a message picture and that message packs a punch. 'Love is blind'.⁹ As God introduces Eve to Adam they have yet to taste forbidden fruit. But their paradise is already infernal, the world is unstable, nothing can be taken for granted, the millennial and the apocalyptic are overwhelming. Both good and evil infect everything, a dream world of creatures living in harmony about to disintegrate.¹⁰ This paradise would not be found on any of the new maps. Bosch is a cartographer of a very specific kind of Hell.

We all live in the valley of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Few other works have been all things to all men. It delivers an experience of meaning. There is something irreducible about it, 'a unity of impulse' to which we may feel impelled to respond.¹¹ Bosch seems to have taken refuge in this dream-world to escape from the miseries of the real one and fear of the next. The magic that reaches out to us casts a spell as his subconscious makes contact with our own. The idea that paintings hide secrets, even conspiracy theories, one thing always pointing to something else, hidden sources opening a secret door that leads to a wall behind which is an esoteric story is, in the case of Bosch, at odds with what the artist committed to these panels: a poignant, religiously-inspired, agitated, unstable, comprehensive vision of human life, suffused with energy and the rapture of the moment, a melancholy sense of the inexorable march of life's abnormalities and tragedy soon to happen, classical equilibrium wrapped in architectonic harmony. The chaos of the world has been seized for an instant when an image might just cohere and form before our eyes. It captures a swell of feeling, a sensation as well as compositional gravity as everything looks about to dissolve.

The artistic equivalent of a grenade rolled across the bedroom floor, the shock of recognition as the artist's eyes see inside us, enough to make someone close the shutters with a slam. His vision came from a contrarian disposition as well as moral conviction.

Demonstrating the free will of mankind to determine its own destiny, and the inferiority of Adam and the prevalence of Christ, are both at the heart of this garden. Its straightforward scheme: creation, Eden, temptation, damnation and Hell, has come to be overlaid with a

theological rebus that obscures its moral message. Analogous with an, albeit limited, Last Judgment, this sin-filled garden mirrors contemporary fears over the world's end. The fact that to our eyes it appears to mix Fellini with David Lynch¹² in its portrayal of lust, mixing some enjoyment with "some delicacy, without, so to speak, coming to the point" is immaterial.¹³

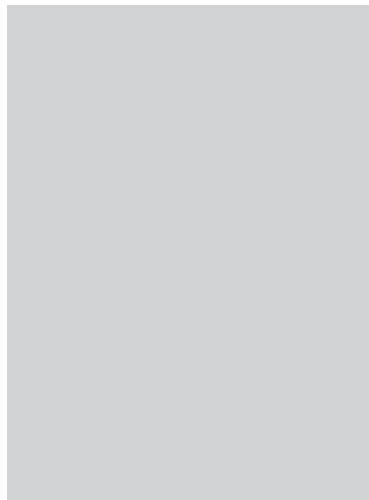
The viewer as voyeur

IT IS PROBABLY not overstating it to suggest that the hermeneutical tools Bosch demanded of his first viewers were probably as great as the interpretative skills required of his audience today, they are essential to the meaning of this triptych. The difference is that 500 years ago an imaginative response to finding and exploring veiled imagery within a picture was always anticipated and the variety of responses within the exegetical traditions of the age stemmed from medieval theology, devotional literature and court culture of the day with its *entr'actes* and amusements, *tableaux-vivants* and multifaceted side orders served up for delectation along the way across the triptych from Heaven to Hell.¹⁴ For us to enter this world leads to hermeneutical struggles of our own as we look for the inspiration behind this painting. That the search for meaning, and multiple layers of multiple meanings, is all part of the strategy behind its composition is hard for us to understand. Yes, we appreciate games; yes, we acknowledge the levels of involvement an image may demand; yes, we can recognise the skills and expertise required to progress through those various levels; and yes, we can develop an appetite for interrogating a problem set before us, especially if it is done as a series of ornately garnished dishes; but the idea that a condition of our collusion in the secret world *of a picture* compels a commitment to explore the complexity of life itself, both in this world and the next, in order that we might become complicit in God's grand design *whilst playing games* is beyond our expectations.

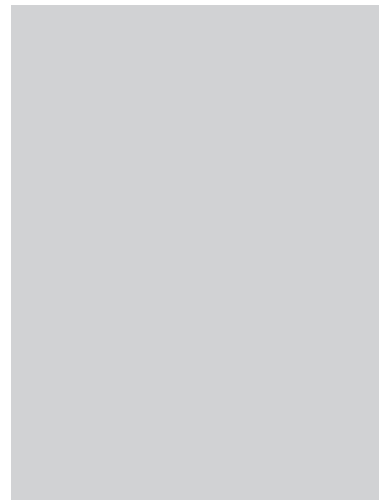
But, in doing, if we can grasp that, it opens us up to recognition of an age in which finding an inventive response to concealed imagery involves us in scrutinising the earth for evil elements emanating from an active, malignant underworld at work to both subvert and pervert this world, fathoming the force that transmutes mankind from the godly into the diabolical and demonic, all within the context of the Bible, inversions of scale in the margins of late-medieval manuscript illustrations, an interpretive culture of courtly literature, and a culture of diversion



99 Girard de Beaulieu
Le Roman de la Rose Ms178 f190v
Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève



100 The Master of St Voulst
Le Roman de la Rose Ms1380
University of Chicago



101 The Master of the Policratique
Le Roman de la Rose
Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa

in Burgundian pleasure gardens of courtly amusement such as Hesdin, together with its festive architectural follies, presented to inspire our engagement as it did Henry III, possibly Engelbert II, and their guests in the Nassau's palace in Brussels.

For them, surely, Heaven was a state in which there would only be the delight of engaging with and enjoying what was worthwhile because it is worthwhile. Wisdom played before God in delight: "I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times. Playing in the world: and my delights *were* to be with the children of men."¹⁵

Voyeurism is erotic gratification derived from watching someone without being seen oneself. It is considered a perversion, with exhibitionism and narcissism two of its more tractable elements. (If we consider that the *Roman de la Rose* was possibly a major point of reference for the central panel, it is worth remembering a defining metaphor of this dream narrative is mirrors and reflections, the mirror of Narcissus, and you, the reader who is reflected in the main character, Amant.)¹⁶ It can also play some part in the way we gaze at art with a voyeuristic look insinuating the politics of sexuality. Within the image men gaze at women who become the object of the gaze, the viewer's gaze identifies with the men's gaze and objectifies the women in the image, and then there is the artist's gaze. Voyeurism is usually thought of in the context of sex but the unknown and the unfamiliar may just as easily cause similar urges in the onlooker. The mutability of identity and the fluidity of the spectator's engagement with any given image makes none of this straightforward. An artist may choose to stress the viewer's complicity in this act as well as undermine it by disconcerting the viewer and the object as he attempts to generate a particular relationship between the viewer and the image. This all has the potential to impact on our own identity as changes in meaning become apparent.

The unholy alliance between voyeurism and exhibitionism that marks our own generation's recalibration of the private is matched only by a need to know, to probe secrets about the 'other' that mirrors a suspicion there is always something we do not know, a quest fuelled by envy of those with more of anything – including pleasure, beauty, happiness – that added extra that is always there in the eye of the beholder.¹⁷ This may all seem very 21st century, but a searching desire for knowledge within the spectacle of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* was a way, 500 years ago, of becoming involved in a dramatisation of voyeurism. We are looking at an outdoor stage set, one where the Garden of Eden has turned the garden of love into a garden of lust, and a garden of excess.

The audience may recognise in the characters in this play a persistent and unrealisable pursuit of satisfaction and pleasure and where that might lead.¹⁸ The figures they stare at are mere shadows of time past, suspended moments that can only be possessed in memory, abstractions of past events and personalities, surrogates for lived experience: they are an acknowledgement of absence.

In art, the truth often lies in what has been lost.

Assured of anonymity, the viewers may like to consider themselves 'apologetic voyeurs', experiencing an easy thrill of intrusion on this set.¹⁹ The subjects are unaware of our presence, looking on. Our desire to stare is being indulged. The dynamics of looking are as destabilised as the scene before us. But there is none of the tension we would normally associate with such an activity, no latent energy. The energy comes when the viewer fills in the gaps, when our subjectivity actively enters into the passive world of the image. Provocative as it may be, the characters appear at best distracted; there is little of mystery to arouse our voyeuristic curiosity. We may think we can see the story but only a fraction is set out before us. We see only what the artist allows while we adopt his distanced and privileged position. There are a series of stills, a connected plot, we have only to work out the story line. We can watch, enjoy, fantasise, inserting and controlling our own narrative, unobserved by the trapped and self-absorbed actors.

They are figuratively arrested and transformed into items for visual consumption. We cannot manipulate or control the image from our distanced perspective but we can invest time and effort to comprehend that Bosch was the consummate voyeur exposing the slippery morals and general dissipation, the decadence and misbehaviour of a mysterious and often violent world that holds a fascination for the viewer. We are accomplices to it by a desire to know that it existed, and exists.

The need to know becomes a voyeuristic activity in itself, and here there is so much to know we are continually forced to redirect our focus and thus made aware of our exploitative role as voyeurs as we become complicit in the drama unfolding there. The penetrating eye of Bosch somehow, cunningly, subverts the viewer's visual authority by drawing us into his world, bridging the gap between our space and his as we exchange Christ's gaze. He alone looks back. That stare invites the viewer to look more closely as well as emphasising the distance between the spectator and the object, a necessary part of voyeuristic pleasure. We are disconcerted, any complacency we might be feeling undermined, our visual pleasure disrupted, and the need to re-examine ourselves and our times made plain.

It was to this unearthly vision that the audience originally gave their devoted attention. It is a monument dedicated to fighting against the future. Bosch saw the evil of his own time not as a throwback but a mere preface to what was about to come. Like all monuments, it stops you in your tracks. And no matter how lost you are, or confused about history, or uncertain where to go next, it tells you the most valuable thing art can tell you, loud and clear: you are here.



102 Jheronimus Bosch *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail) Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

The dream

"The waking have one world in common, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own" Heraclitus of Ephesus

THERE ARE so many references to dreams and dreaming: Michiel's 'canvas representing dreams', the Visio Tnugdali, the visions of Dante, *Dreams of the Hereafter*, the dreams of Amant in the *Roman de la Rose*, there have been dreams and nightmares of the world's end, a young man's dream of Venice to start with, and we shall hear of Lampsonius' reference to the new Bosch 'who imitated his Master's clever dreams', and then dreamt of Cockaigne, a dreamland of excess where we will lie beneath a tree in the sunshine to reconsider these never-never lands, all of which, it may come as a surprise, carry a religious message.²⁰

It was an age in which men still saw visions. Tales of voyages to and from the medieval netherworld gripped their audiences whose insatiable appetite for peering into the abyss aroused artistic adventure. The manuscripts transformed Hell into a world of mesmerising beauty, the artists dramatised those visions, doubtless attracting the devout seeking out the profane enjoyment of a quick thrill in the lush landscape of the illumination. These fabrications of the infernal regions were pursued with all the fervour the artists could manage to endow eternal damnation, their visionary tours for the Hell-bound supported by abominable demons administering gruesome punishments.

In the *Garden of Earthly Delights* Adam's wide-open eyes suggest to Falkenburg the dream-like state of visionary sight, medieval exegesis having interpreted Adam's sleep during the creation of Eve as a visionary state in which he 'saw' his marriage as foreshadowing the union of Christ and the Church.²¹ He writes of true dreams and false dreams (somnia and insomnium) throughout the history of mankind, fleeting, transitional images pervading the dream landscape of paradise,²² the phantasmal dreaming characters inhabiting a delusional dream world in the central panel,²³ with 'double' illusory dreamlike forms under the devil's influence, fanciful façades shielding evil, all of which appear caricatured by less distinguished followers.²⁴ This phantasmal imagery is a dream world of temptation and diversion that the beholder has to disentangle so as to enter the realms of memory, knowledge and spiritual insight.²⁵ If only they might achieve the gaze of Adam in response to Christ could they see the world through truly spiritual eyes.²⁶

The question of the 'spiritual self' is one that keeps recurring with Bosch. It is sometimes assumed that Christianity offered all the answers to a life that can be cruel, messy, and decidedly unjust. It does not. Rather it pointed mankind towards the One who took grievous injustice on Himself and assured people that He remained with them in their perplexity. He encouraged them to look for signs of His activity in the least likely places, plucking 'something positive from something awful' and promised that although we might have difficulty seeing that, even the most powerful evil would not have the last word. We had to look more deeply. He is looking.

Searching for spiritual insight in *The Garden* some may have considered St John among the *Earthly Delights*: 'God is love and whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him'.²⁷ Those that could not, in the light of what they saw there, contrary to their religious expectations, would have to be reminded of St Paul's definition of love as that which is slow to take offence and, like the rest of us, be drawn in to think a little more about it, and about what God as the spectator of Creation thought of his handiwork. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Magical realism

"Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange, hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires" Pablo Picasso²⁸

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS can be described as magical realism, in the sense that the term was originally coined by the German art critic Franz Roh in the late 1920s.²⁹ Just as writers dubbed magical realists drastically experiment with their subject matter, weaving the descriptive with the dream, the tragic with the trivial, the ordinary with the fantastic, violating expectations by fusing the everyday with nightmares so as to create a renewed world before our eyes, Bosch weaves his dark materials with a web of magical thinking. Woven into the warp and web of his imagery are religion from Genesis to Revelation, myths, folk tales, the angelic and the demonic, from the Fall of the Rebel Angels to the Apocalypse, in a blizzard of imagery, stuffed full of spatial ambiguities and ambiguous relationships. But this brocade of magical thinking is based on the Bible. Bosch conjured his own very special world of magic to challenge a world of sin.

His dark materials include all those items that De Tolnay focused on, the dream symbols and sexual imagery – “the Fountain of Adultery in the midst of the Pond of Lust”.³⁰ And yet if the painting is really about such a hot subject, why is it so lacking in sensuality?³¹ If the “veritable forest” of suggestively paired figures that confront us are acting out a sensual dream, where is the desire, where is the passion, where is the obscenity, the perversions? Why are they absent? So joyful and innocent is the sex portrayed in the central panel, so lacking in sensuality, that it does not appear in the least wicked.

It is not as though painting had not previously acknowledged male lust, some pictures were steeped in longing.³² That desire was usually submersed under layers of camouflage, yet here was a conversation piece that positively encouraged shyness and casual banter to turn into a full-blooded frank discussion of sex. This vision of carnal lust is not the “shameless, naked eroticism” that Fraenger would have us believe.³³ Sensual certainly, primitive, chaste, even innocent bliss, but the sexuality is sublimated, lechery and depravity are almost absent – it is not erotic. Possible symbols of lechery and depravity are evident, but they are only that, evident nothing more. As Falkenburg has observed, one frequently sees what one wants to see.³⁴

Scarcely passionate, strangely sexless, the figures in *The Garden* are on the brink of consummating their lust. They are on the brink, on the cusp, right there, on the extreme edge of sin. Highly suggestive, the painting is an encyclopaedia of Netherlandish folklore, a compendium of medieval sayings and songs, all luring us into a love garden, paradise.³⁵ Nevertheless, it is a false paradise – a place that medieval literature keeps returning to. This is a garden of Eden in Hell.

Sexual attraction has led to carnal confusion.³⁶ In this vision of never-ending lust it is the paradise that seduces, a place where we should never forget that the Devil takes possession of women through sexual congress and men through sodomy. “Virginity is condemned, hell is reserved for those who do not observe the commandments of nature and of love.”³⁷ As everyone knew, from the handbook for witch hunters, *Malleus Maleficarum*, the hammer of the witches, published in 1486, the Devil was having considerable success, and not only with women. Quoting Aquinas “who in turn followed St Augustine: “This evil of the Devil creeps in through all the sensual approaches; he gives himself to figures, he adapts himself to colours; he abides in sounds; he lurks in smells; he infuses himself into flavours”.³⁸ And what flavours those fruits contain.

One of the best smells in a garden is the smell of the first strawberry. Strawberries produce flowers early in the Spring and are harvested between June and September. An

aphrodisiac and a laxative, a medicine and a poultice, the strawberry has been used to symbolize peace, perfection, prosperity, and when forced to ripen early, as a metaphor for unwilling maturity.³⁹ José de Sigüenza wrote about the brief pleasure of the strawberry.⁴⁰ As a symbol of temptation, it is perfect. The taste can be fantastic but the problem with strawberries is, no matter how many one eats, one remains hungry. There is certainly pleasure to be had in the bounteous nature of this paradise, a land of giant fruits that are everyone's quarry, gargantuan arboriculture relentlessly pursued in a wild, whirling cavalcade across a restless, syncopated field. The turbulent scene is full of people wearing the giant fruits, crawling in and out of them, even feasting on them.

All fruits are sex symbols, according to the interpretation of dreams in antiquity, thus Bosch's "godless symbols of sexual pleasure"⁴¹ constitute "a fruitarians' bacchanale".⁴² God in the shape of Christ is present yet as the Bible has it "by their fruits you shall know them"⁴³ leading to the conclusion that "this paradise contains the germs of its own destruction".⁴⁴ This "nightmare of humanity"⁴⁵ demonstrates above all that the artist's purpose "is to show the evil consequences of sensual pleasure and to stress its ephemeral character".⁴⁶

De Tolnay later goes so far as to refer to the fourth heaven in the *Apocalypse of Baruch*⁴⁷ as a possible literary source of inspiration for the central panel.⁴⁸ "All things are clean to the clean: but to them that are defiled, and to unbelievers, nothing is clean: but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" – the words attributed to St Paul (but probably written by someone else a generation later) are part of the Midnight Mass at Christmas.⁴⁹ The words are from the letter to Titus, that has been interpreted as an 'early church manual' setting out as it does the problems of looking after the community, the threats to church order and to true doctrine.⁵⁰

Unfolding history to exploit the potential of a triptych

"*Shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?*" Book of Genesis 4:7

THE STARTING POINT has to be that this is a triptych, as such its original concept relates to an altar, hence it is a religious painting of some sort, and is most unlikely to be anything other than a display of orthodox Catholic belief at the turn of the 15th century.⁵¹ A religious painting, however, that could also have been commissioned by secular patrons as a discussion piece for diversion and entertainment.⁵² Working as a triptych, directly religious or not, the closed panels must connect with the panels once opened.⁵³ Thus, reading from left to right,⁵⁴ we move from the creation, probably the third or fourth day, into the Garden of Eden, through sin in a garden of earthly delights, and on to eternal damnation in one of the most hellish scenes of Hell ever painted. Creation, disobedience, sin, Hell, within which there are a host of elements to interpret, mysteries to unravel, symbols to search for, biblical exegesis to expound. It may include a whole host of ideas allegorical,⁵⁵ alchemical⁵⁶ and astrological,⁵⁷ but rather than approach this as if it were some pornographic 'Where's Wally', neither is *The Garden of Earthly Delights* an image of some sinless paradise, a labyrinth of pleasure, sexual imagery without the power to offend.⁵⁸ It is not simply an adult adventure playground.

The correspondence between the external shutters and the internal panels through a sequence of time unfolding is suggested by the creation of the world and its reflection in the unfolding of world history inside; the sunlit uplands of the world in leaf foreshadowing a paradise garden, and the world in shadow mirroring an interior scene from Hell. Overlaying the chronological unfolding on the interior, De Tolnay went so far as to argue that when opened "the forms on the horizon seem to describe a semicircle in perspective, encompassing the entire triptych and probably alluding to the terrestrial globe" that reflect the focus on the world outside.⁵⁹ The sense of continuous narration is set within this overall perspective, three panels

each with three zones, three scenes with their own perspectives and horizons giving us multiple perspectives and focal points to contemplate. The unity and division of the continuous action give the painting a cinematic quality that includes all the time lapses and ambiguities that we may expect from the apparently continuous action in a film.

The debate that centred around St Augustine and Denis the Carthusian as to whether the world was created in an instant or over time, or whether some elements were created over time and some simultaneously, may be one way of interpreting the “intricate web of meanings” running through a multilayered composition with multiple viewpoints.⁶⁰ Whatever the interpretation, folded shut “Bosch introduces into the history of art... the first pure landscape” – a world without figures.⁶¹

Jacobs has argued that *The Garden* is key to the “disintegration of the format at the turn of the century” in that it rejects the focus on religious matter, the emphasis on the centre of the interior, and adopts a unified approach to the overall concept as opposed to the traditional additive scheme such that Bosch built a significant relationship between the outer and inner panels.⁶² It could also be argued, however, that by his approach to content, by extending its range, Bosch was simply exploiting the potential of the triptych to the full. It in no way belittles the achievements of the artist to suggest that his emphasis on worldly imagery is no less religious, to see that the central panel is still key to appreciating the driving force behind the overall painting, and that it is the visual unification of all the episodic content into a consistent narrative that is the one new element here.

Whilst the touches of colour in the fully pictorial grisaille external panels signal they are no mere prologue to the main event, and there is a new overall visual unity both outside and in, constructed by its panoramic viewpoint of a world landscape, there are still divisions between the panels to the point that the continuous horizon line between the centre panel and Hell all but disappears.⁶³ Divisions within each panel mean that as each element interlocks, time unfolds across and within each of the panels.

With its tortures, machines, fiery landscape and exaggerated proportions, the Vienna *Last Judgement* set out the collective fate of mankind. Artistically it anticipated *The Garden of Earthly Delights* where Bosch gives full rein to his vision of the nightmare of human life and the world as Hell. Inside *The Garden* takes the form of a Last Judgement, the original garden of desire one crisp morning sweeping across into an endless summer afternoon in the central panel and a freezing winter on the right where the delights have become tortures. The fountain of life on the left has become a fountain of youth in the centre and freezes up on the right as the frozen lake of the Inferno. Thus life on Earth is “bracketed between the beginning and the end” with Bosch far more “at home in hell than in heaven”.⁶⁴ If it takes the form of a Last Judgment, we should consider the idea that it is indeed “a disguised *Last Judgment*... a divine judgement”, one where “God’s judgment is imminent” as the cavalcade perform a quasi-dance of death to remind us of both our fragility, and the futility of our life on earth.⁶⁵

And if the morbid fascination of the central panel is ambiguous, consider the others.

The continuity between the left and the centre panels is so striking that the lack of continuity between the centre and right hand panels is rather startling. Not only the landscape but the group of figures bottom left of the centre panel are gesturing towards Adam and Eve in the left hand panel. Another group, bottom right of the centre panel has also been linked to the group bottom left. This group includes “the only clothed person” in the picture, or he may be “an unclad man” looking out at us, as he points to a woman lying with her head propped up on her elbow.⁶⁶

The form of the painting is quite different to the thought behind it. But the ambiguities of connection and division reinforce it. The triptych with Eden and Hell framing a central allegory in one continuous sweep is similar to the *Haywain* and the *Last Judgment*.⁶⁷ The motifs

from the margins of illuminated manuscripts,⁶⁸ flora from early woodcut prints, symbols of alchemy, the garden of love “as a staple of late medieval courtly romances and imagery”⁶⁹ – these references are just that, part of the visual language of the time.⁷⁰ Bosch was visually aware, a man of his age. But the overwhelming cultural inheritance of his faith, the importance of the saints, Augustine in particular, and the imminence of the Last Days combined to conceive something distinct in the history of art.



103 Jheronimus Bosch *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail) Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

The wedding in Paradise

“What will survive of us is love” Philip Larkin⁷¹

“Take my hand, I’m a stranger in Paradise / All lost in a wonderland” Robert Wright and George Forrest⁷²

THE WEDDING in Paradise is not only Adam to Eve, but also Eve ceremonially joined to Christ, the new Adam.⁷³ Adam and Eve are being blessed by God the Son, the New Adam, in Paradise.⁷⁴ Adam’s feet touch Christ to emphasise the connection. And in prefiguring the crucifixion Adam’s crossed feet illustrate the redemption of mankind. Fathers of the Church such as Irenaeus who saw God’s purpose unfolding throughout human history, had delighted in stressing symmetries and ‘recapitulations’ that the Old and New Testaments of the Bible revealed.⁷⁵ The fateful role of the Tree of Life in Eden was thus counterbalanced by Christ’s Cross, the tree of eternal life; the disobedience of Eve was neutralised by the obedience of Mary, and the fall of the first man had thus been remedied by the second Adam, Christ rising from the dead.⁷⁶ A culture fascinated by the poetry of numbers and geometry found this very appealing. The doctrine of recapitulation showed that God had worked on the plans before in the world He created, demonstrating a final purpose, especially as it buttressed the concept of a thousand-year rule of God’s chosen that became the basis of millenarianism.⁷⁷

Thus in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Jesus Christ, the mirror of perfect humanity, and God the Son of Man, the New Adam, challenges us to return the stare he fixes on us. His staring eyes are set firmly on us, his audience, the viewer. Adding a personal touch, on the sixth day of Creation, “God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them”⁷⁸ – a mirror of divinity. Christ’s presence is also a reminder of the medieval belief in the Trinity having all participated in the Creation. That “divine gaze proves integral to the mirror relationship between the soul and Christ, as bride and bridegroom”⁷⁹ – a marriage of minds.

Is the picture about one particular marriage or about marriage – all marriages? It’s both. What makes art universal is that it is intensely, vividly specific.

Is there a bride of Christ?⁸⁰ The concept of marriage between God and humanity occurs in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus speaks of himself as a bridegroom.⁸¹ John the Baptist speaks about Jesus as the bridegroom.⁸² Paul spoke of the Church as Christ's intended.⁸³ The Church is betrothed, espoused and promised as the intended bride of Jesus Christ⁸⁴ – an as yet unconsummated marriage. At the end of the Bible the Church as bride is married to Jesus.⁸⁵ In order to prepare, to be a perfect bride “you must be born again”.⁸⁶ And whilst the idea of both men and women as brides may strike some as confusing, being ‘in’ Christ there is no gender – “You are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus”.⁸⁷

Having “created man to his own image... male and female he created them” God instructed them to “increase and multiply, and fill the earth” something Catholics were instructed was not a command but a blessing, rendering them fruitful.⁸⁸ However, whilst there are no children in this picture, many of the adults appear child-like, behaving in a childish way, and indulging in child's play.⁸⁹ “Playing in the world: and my delights *were* to be with the children of men.”⁹⁰ Through ignorance and desire, they have turned away from God in Paradise in search of a false paradise, gone directly from Creation to procreation, seemingly oblivious to the destiny that awaits them in the right hand panel.⁹¹ Is that a clue to this Garden of Eden in Hell? Evil appears to carry with it the horrible and horrifying gift of eternal youth.⁹²

“Marriage, worthy of the happiness of Paradise, should have had desirable fruit without the shame of lust, had there been no sin”⁹³ and so desirable fruit is depicted in the centre panel: “for it was after sin that lust began”.⁹⁴ Carnal knowledge in an “excess of lust and absence of shame in the innumerable sexual acts within the central panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* clearly indicate the sinful, self-indulgent nature of humanity there”.⁹⁵ Again, people see what they want to see. This is painting directed by Alfred “I never made a horror film” Hitchcock. Bosch is the Alfred Hitchcock of Netherlandish art. The central panel is highly suggestive, it is not explicit.⁹⁶ There is no shame here. It displays self-indulgence, sensual appetites, lustful flesh, not sexual congress, and a morbid interest on the part of the artist. The enemy of mankind was far more extensive: “the world, the flesh, and the devil” were the enemies we faced.⁹⁷ Those evils are the starting point for Bosch.

Profane and even erotic imagery was not unknown in a 15th century altarpiece.⁹⁸ A pleasure garden without God is not in itself irreligious when considered together with its companion panels that create a moral framework within which it is viewed: it may dominate, it may titillate, but God's absence from the field of lust is more thought-provoking than it is heretical, and certainly can be viewed as a condemnation of sin in the world. Because so many find it hard to imagine receiving Communion with this painting as a backdrop to the celebrant, does not make it impossible.

Potentially distracting, provocative certainly, it dramatises the struggle between morality and immorality in the world, good and evil, the choices communicants should have made before meeting God. Bosch deviates from the norm, distorts scale, is honest enough to show that the world is dominated by sin, and God easily ignored. Significantly, his circumstances mean that he feels secure enough to portray his ideas in an unusually and highly dramatic vein. Outside the text above the Creation is an admonition, inside is equally admonitory as Bosch shows carnal knowledge overwhelming any spiritual progress, with every indulgence punished in Hell. So far so straightforward. Everything leads us to the Last Judgement. Every punishment will fit the crime. There is no escape. In using visual extremism he attempts to ensure that in our materialism and sensuality we do not become so detached from spirituality that our inner vision is clouded over to the point at which we become blind to God. The message: our spiritual journey is continually interrupted by repetitions of Original Sin (as developed by St Augustine), sensual indulgence is overwhelming our faith (as it did for Augustine), and any progress proscribed by our lack of insight into heeding the warnings that are all around us.

This nude epic of mankind turning away from God of its own free will intrigues and fascinates everyone. Stand in the Prado and watch the crowds. That all too familiar question is never far away: what does it mean? Once asked, someone in the crowd is always ready with an explanation.⁹⁹ But Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, whereby the closer you look the less you know receives in Bosch an eerie and disconcerting psychological expression.¹⁰⁰ Confronted with something we do not understand, we grasp too quickly at meaning. In the face of anxiety of the unknown the imposition of intellectual order, however unconvincing, becomes essential. Just like theology.

Where God and great art meet is in waiting for some truth to come and reveal itself. There are no built-in explanations, no easy answers. Mostly the explanations are expressions of our own impatience.¹⁰¹ Which brings us back to an impatient saint, and the key to the central panel of the painting we know as *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.¹⁰²

Boschian drama from Augustinian vision

"God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist" Augustine

AUGUSTINE, a 4th century provincial priest, at first peripheral to the Church but whose testimony in the *Confessions* relates his own impatience with current Bible interpretation led him to define Divine Grace, The Fall of Man, Original Sin, Free Will and Predestination, and to polemical controversy. Augustine shaped the Church. In that, he was second only in importance to Paul of Tarsus. And between Paul and Luther no one had a greater influence on the Catholic Church and theology than Augustine. He was the main figure in two crises that determined the true Church and how salvation was to be achieved.¹⁰³ Whilst adhering to the idea of the pilgrim church, Augustine effectively developed the idea of the Church as an institution with a clear hierarchy, it was in fact 'the communion of the emperor', and if threatened in its universality, could compel, *Coge intrare*, adherence to it by theological justification. In citing the parable of the marriage feast he eventually encouraged violence against heretics and schismatics, and gave future cover to holy war against any form of deviation.¹⁰⁴ And in his explanation of original sin from the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, "in whom all have sinned",¹⁰⁵ Augustine sexualized original sin.¹⁰⁶

By making sin self-centred Augustine gave Bosch the spur to construct a religious work that might also serve as a conversation piece for the intelligentsia. (It may also have prompted the idea for the owl and 'the sin inside ourselves'.) Augustine's *Confessions* are a conversation with God. What lay ahead was turmoil around a debate triggered by the long-dead Augustine; obedience to the Church or the way to salvation. But for Bosch, Augustine was the spark.

Augustine knew that evil was real. That the power of evil penetrates the interior world of faith was a source of suffering. The critical question was, what was evil, and how do you reconcile its existence with the omnipotence of God. Gnostics saw existence as a dualistic struggle, and Manichaeism, the Gnostic religion of the day, attracted Augustine for nine years until he turned, first to Neoplatonism, and 'haunted by doubts, anxieties and the nature of truth, reality and wisdom' in 386AD accidentally found the Epistles of St Paul at the prompting of a little girl he overheard in a Milanese garden chanting 'take it and read'. Opened at random, the words of Romans 13:14 changed his life – "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh and its concupiscences".¹⁰⁷

Strong, sexual desire was out. He left his mistress of 15 years, decided not to marry his fiancée, celibacy beckoned. He would come to see original sin, the fatal flaw 'which in his theology all humans have inherited from the sin of Adam and Eve' as inseparable from the sexual act. The consequences of that thought for the Church were momentous.

At some point, Augustine met another North African, Ponicianus, who had turned his own life around reading *The Life of St Antony*, a book attributed to the Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, c296- 373AD, and generally considered to be the founding text of Christian monasticism.¹⁰⁸ Political ructions within the priesthood ended Augustine's dream of establishing a celibate religious community and a chance visit to Hippo Regius led to his being ordained a priest and soon bishop.¹⁰⁹ Hence Augustine of Hippo came to write his theological works against a background of pastoral work in the community.

It was also written against a crisis in world history: the backdrop of the sack of Rome by the barbarians in 410AD and the collapse of the Christian Roman Empire. In 325AD Constantine had gathered the first great council of the churches of the Empire at Nicaea (Iznik) "sitting amongst the Christian bishops... in his own person the beginning of Europe's Middle Ages".¹¹⁰ Then, after Constantine's death in May 337AD "like a burnt out candle the flame of Empire began to flicker blue" as barbarian hordes of Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, Alans and others overran first Gaul and then the 'eternal city' itself.¹¹¹ Confronted by ruin of the material world, the 'triumph of Christianity' was anything but certain, many blaming the Empire's collapse on its flirtation with the new religion.

At the time St Jerome was in his cell in Bethlehem when 'a terrible rumour from the west was brought to him' and 'I well nigh forgot my own name'. Augustine was in Hippo when news of the fall stimulated him to write his greatest work, *The City of God*, in an attempt to explain the Roman world's catastrophe.¹¹² Covering the broad canvas of history, *De Civitate Dei* focuses on a spiritual city built over the ruins. He developed a theodicy in an intellectual attempt to justify the existence of God in the face of all this human suffering. It was a vision of world history on a grand scale, seen ultimately as a battle between *civitas terrena* – the earthly community, and the *civitas Dei* – the City of God, a distinction that referred to two different states of the soul that would acquire their visible embodiments only with the Last Judgement.

'The earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly city glories in the Lord.' It all turned on the question of evil. What was the nature of evil, what caused evil, and how did it relate to the goodness of God? Augustine saw evil as 'non-existence', a falling away from God towards nothingness. A visit to Auschwitz cancels out that theory, evil is more than nothing, however, Augustine was going against the idea that had dominated thinking up to that point, that evil was a positive force struggling for mastery with the forces of light. If there is to be no salvation and *The Garden of Delights* "a manifesto of this pessimistic theology of Bosch", we are faced with an awful warning of what results from animal passions and earthly pleasures: evil breeds evil.¹¹³

St Augustine's 'progress from reason to faith' concluded his monumental work after 13 years by conjuring up that indescribable and indefinable day on which God completes his work of creation: "There we shall rest and we shall see. We shall see and we shall love. We shall love and we shall praise. Behold what shall be in the end and shall not end. For what other thing is our end, but to come to that kingdom of which there is no end?"¹¹⁴ So with Bosch. We have come full cycle. The cycle of history is complete. As Augustine saw evil as a disorder in a good creation, a direct consequence of the misuse of human freedom, so with Bosch; as Augustine argued that evil was the result of human beings attempting to become something they were not, little gods with the power to give and take away the lives of others, so with Bosch. Augustine argued that we cannot diminish the moral responsibility for our actions, and should pray that good may come out of evil. Praying that good may come out of evil is a hard task, but that is the hope embodied in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. They say 'you are nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth'. As with Augustine, so with Bosch: the human soul does not live in isolation but in communion and The City of God, the place where all humanity finds blessing, and a far cry from the Garden of Eden.

Do we need faith to see religious art? Can aesthetics be detached from spiritual purpose?

Can we appreciate a work of art when we do not share the artist's original purpose? Any pleasure we may get from seeing a picture is very different from that first audience, whilst the power of art to "express the faith and call us to a relationship with God" is at the heart of the Christian tradition. "Art is a doorway to God" and as such it was a portal to the infinite that Bosch continually tried to enter.¹¹⁵

With its narrative sweep, Bosch has manufactured drama out of Augustine's vision to display a set piece of medieval orthodoxy that encompasses the whole of history from the Creation to Final Judgement.¹¹⁶ It is a universal image that may well have fuelled masturbatory fantasies, a triptych so full of innuendo and phallic reference that it could have served as a conversation piece for the cognoscenti rather than as an object of veneration by the virtuous. Yet with the scale and presence to be an altarpiece so intimate in detail that it delivered a secular application of a religious moral lesson as a form of instruction, a sinful world on its journey away from faith, from temptation to desire and from desire to damnation with only Hellfire waiting on the horizon, it forms a fitting background to faith on the cusp of the modern world.¹¹⁷

Its power expresses the artist's faith and calls his audience to establish a relationship with God before it is too late. Reflecting on universal human experience, the sacred and profane intertwined, the viewer is faced with the trials of being human as Bosch expresses the need to go beyond what one sees, and reveals his own quest for the infinite, the unfathomable within ourselves. "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure, and we are so awed because it serenely disdains to annihilate us. Every angel is terrifying."¹¹⁸ That terror, from the Latin root meaning 'to cause to tremble', persisted from century to century because it achieved its goal, and faced with a Boschian Hell a congregation was meant to tremble. To confront, to challenge, to understand, to overcome, and to transcend – this is the force behind all great works of art. In that Bosch was attempting to transcend himself, to overcome his limitations, this work is not merely a reflection of anything, but has become something that transformed the artist and the recipient, unlocking the transcendental potential that resides in us all as he sought to open up his audience to another world.¹¹⁹

Seeing *The Garden of Earthly Delights* for the first time

"The propensity of historians to straightjacket observed phenomena into a system of cause and effect lies at the bottom of many errors" Max J Friedländer¹²⁰

ON 30 JULY 1517, the year after Bosch died, the Cardinal of Aragon's secretary recorded seeing "panels on which bizarre things have been painted" in his journal.¹²¹ He had seen what we now refer to as *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. 1517, the first known reference. One of the most remarkable paintings in history, one that continually gives rise to some of the wildest theories ever recorded by art historians and one, "so fantastic", as the secretary Antonio de Beatis continued, "that it is impossible to describe them properly to those who have not seen them".¹²² And where did he see it? In a room with an enormous bed, one capable of accommodating 50 people,¹²³ in the Palace of Nassau in Brussels where it was apparently located for the entertainment of guests.¹²⁴ De Beatis was clearly captivated by the magnificence of the palace and its wealth of nude paintings. It could hardly have been in a more prominent place. It was the ultimate party piece.¹²⁵

The courtly audience would have been having fun, indulging to excess, perhaps challenged and unsettled when they first saw this revolutionary image, one of the greatest conversation pieces about spiritual progress – and no one recorded their emotions, wrote about it to a friend, communicated their feelings – until 1517.¹²⁶ As Elsig commented in 2001 "it is

surprising that a work as complex and singular as *The Garden of Earthly Delights* generated no echoes before the beginning of the sixteenth century, even with Alart Duhamel, who was at 's-Hertogenbosch between 1478 and 1494-5".¹²⁷

It is surely more than surprising? Arguing the private nature of the commission as a possible reason for its invisibility will not do.

If those that would make of this an early work by Bosch can explain how a painting, a garden of love so original, that "deals with the distinction between the real, heavenly paradise and the false love paradise in which lust has taken the place of the highest divine mystery", one that yokes the worlds of aristocratic privilege and religion together, might be kept secret for over 35 years, it will require more than dendrochronology.¹²⁸ Theories as to a late dating of *The Garden* linked to the history of cultivation of madroños in southern Europe, a 'matrimonial mirror' to hold before Hendrik III of Nassau and Françoise-Louise of Savoye after their wedding in 1503, the porcupine emblem adopted by Louis XII after 1498, the style of panoramic world views after 1510, the voyages of discovery that may be considered responsible for the seed capsule of devil's claw (*ibicella lutea*), the giraffe, the griffon, the exotic dragon tree in Paradise, and the black man, have all been put forward. Alternatively, theories that link it to an early dating with reference to the dissolute character of Engelbrecht II that might give rise to an assignment from him specifying erotic content, the relationship of the painting to known commissions for illuminated breviaries and a *Roman de la Rose*, the style of panoramic world views after 1440, the relatively early initiation of Bosch into the Brotherhood of Our Lady in 1488, or a less experienced artist's inability to locate Eve's knees in a suitably reverential position on the ground ('the best Bosch could do at the time'), taken together with everlasting arguments as to the significance of the inclusion or not of an artist's signature, have all been made. None of the arguments in either direction are insurmountable.

The only argument that might give serious pause for thought with regards the date of this painting's execution is as follows. As a young man, out to make a reputation for himself, a commission from Engelbrecht II of Nassau for 'something different', an instruction perhaps to 'let yourself go' on a secular altarpiece free of traditional iconography, 'give me eroticism, but be careful, couch it in biblical terms', might just be something he could be prepared to undertake.¹²⁹ Once he was more established he would not be prepared to take the risk, to be associated with such a project. But in his twenties, just possibly. We can reject this argument for a number of reasons but principally because by background, training and association, it is difficult to see Bosch as desperate enough to feel the need to go out on a limb. Those who argue for an early date still put its completion after the artist was in all probability married. And once married, Bosch no longer needed to paint to commission. He did not need the money. He could paint what he liked. Whether in the 15th century he would produce anything other than by commission is another matter. But he did not need to court disapproval by undertaking such a risky project unless he wanted to do it. To argue that it was completed even earlier, one of the very first paintings he undertook, even before he was married, seems too fantastic. If he did this, early in his career, and it was a success, why did he then do nothing like it again?

The similarities with the Vienna *Last Judgement*, particularly in the right wing, further undermine any idea that they might be painted more than 25 years apart. Artists who have returned years later to an earlier subject, have seldom made a success of it, generally through lack of inspiration.¹³⁰ Questions of an artist's development, and the changes that take place in their vision and technique throughout their life do not bring forth satisfyingly consistent answers. However, the observation that old artists shared "a sense of isolation, a feeling of holy rage, developing into what I have called transcendental pessimism; a mistrust of reason, a belief in instinct" does point to the inevitable shift in perspective and values brought about by age.¹³¹ Some artists mature early and then run out of steam, others gain momentum and even peak in

old age. Paring away at non-essentials as they gain a new intensity is certainly not uncommon, the mere spectre of mortality surely counting for something, as the process of making assumes a greater importance than the result. The colours may get darker (and they do in many artists), the drawing more casual, accuracy less significant than overall coherence, because with age comes the distillation of a lifetime's ideas.¹³² Whereas in youth, in seeking to establish oneself, it is reception that matters, in old age it is production.

"Life isn't measured by the breaths you take ..."

THE POWER OF ART to startle and amaze, to be completely taken by surprise, mind unclouded by foreknowledge, anticipation or foresight, a first sighting that carries no expectation and no threat of disappointment, is almost unimaginable today, the shock of the new a bygone phrase from another time, and another place, a remote age. As Walt Disney once famously put it: "life isn't measured by the breaths you take, it's measured by the breathtaking moments" – which is exactly how it must have felt seeing this picture for the first time 500 years ago, and how it still feels seeing it for the first time today. There are very, very few paintings of which that can be said. Is it even reasonable to suggest that such a work could have remained unrecorded, anywhere, a secret for over 35 years?

Once he had finished it, did Bosch understand what he had done or realise what he had produced; a triumph so spectacular that it established him as some kind of artistic saint or a catastrophe so grotesque that it was only suitable for private viewing? Art may warp and destroy the life it draws upon but may also seek to simplify and formalise the confused world of experience, to isolate particular emotions and states of mind from the flux of feeling in which we live, to make conflicts coherent, to illustrate values and to impose moral (and thus human) order upon an immoral, inhuman universe, to make intention visible and to suggest the process by which it takes effect. *The Garden* is a critical survey of this function. What Bosch was doing was in fact something that was formally impossible at the time, looking beyond the simplification and formalisation by which the world was represented in art and to show the raw, confused flux of the world itself, where nothing has its moral value written upon it, or for that matter its cause or its effect, or even its boundaries or its identity. The most obvious characteristic of this approach is the ambiguity of some of the work that has, in turn, given rise to such conflicting interpretations.

The extraordinary trick of the picture is to inexorably draw and involve the viewer. From the pink fleshy structures pricking against the sky as if grown from tongues, lips, labia in some mad geneticist's architectural experiment, to the spotlights blazing through a smoke-filled night sky as if we are watching the firebombing of a wartime city, to the fountains of heresy and blasphemy – it is as potent as it is captivating, as tantalising as it is inescapable, images seared onto the brain.¹³³ With St Augustine and his reading of Paul, Bosch shows that humanity as a whole is full of sin, a *massa peccati*, and that, left to itself, without the grace of God, it would inevitably perish.¹³⁴ We sin, because we are one with Adam.¹³⁵ When we sin, the artist accepts we are doing what comes naturally. The result of original sin is spiritual and physical death. Free will is so impaired by Adam's fall that it chooses evil. Evil is normal, it exists; however, it can be overcome.¹³⁶ So is the desire for redemption. God condemns those who have not heard the gospel because all have sinned in Adam. The dogma of original sin is inseparably linked to the dogma of salvation and freedom in Christ. Grace is in God's gift. For Augustine, grace works like a law of nature, drawing the human will to a God with divine omnipotence. Thus if we are faced with an image that attempts to encompass the doctrine of original sin, show a visual link between the first progenitor and Christ, and the consequences of Adam's sin for humanity, we

can be sure that it is precisely in order to highlight the immeasurable gift of grace in Christ, that Bosch would wish to demonstrate the centrality of that grace by dwelling for so long in the central panel on sin because “where sin abounded, grace did more abound”.¹³⁷

Chekhov wrote in his notebooks “Man will become better when we have shown him to himself as he is”. Personal recompense would only be paid in the next world. Like Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* who believes that mankind is marching towards a ‘higher happiness’ to which he is showing others the way, even if he is never to see it himself, Bosch shows who, how and in what circumstances people were thinking about God and pessimism. He was far more than an impartial witness to events. He judges his characters. Yet the tragedy he shows overwhelming humanity is not death but continuation of life, the pain of losing the past with all the happiness and wealth of possibilities that it contained, compounded by the pain of facing the future in all its emptiness.

The ability to endure was one of the characteristics of the age. Bosch cycles deftly around the beliefs of his age, at every turn becoming more intense, getting at something new, some different layer of meaning, acutely aware of the questions he poses the picture’s audience. His work is an affirmation of belief, and knowing that his audience is already convinced of the importance of the material he is illustrating, it pushes the audience as far as he can go.¹³⁸ As the shutters open, and we move from the beginning of the world, it is like God opening up His creation to take a look at how it is all going ...



104
Jheronimus Bosch
*The Creation of
the World*
(outer shutters)
Madrid, Museo
Nacional del Prado

Entr'acte Francis Bacon

The human zoo: to shock is not enough

"He would approach painting in much the same way as he approached gambling, risking everything on a single brushstroke" John Richardson¹³⁹

Looking at the work of Francis Bacon is "to realize that part of its energy derives from its refusal to go softly into art history".¹⁴⁰ For about a century before Francis Bacon, British art had ceased to be of any importance. That changed in April 1945 when a group show at Lefevre included *Three studies for figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*. By 1962 Bacon had a career-defining retrospective at the Tate Gallery and was feted everywhere as the greatest living painter.¹⁴¹

How are the mighty fallen.¹⁴² Following his death in 1992 he suffered in the way most masters do these days, at the hands of a dreadful biopic, disputes over drawings,¹⁴³ a heavy-handed dealer,¹⁴⁴ hype, fame and framing, and critical reaction.¹⁴⁵ His seemingly unassailable position came under threat, definitive images of a traumatized era notwithstanding.¹⁴⁶ Yet before Francis Bacon, British art had needed someone to kick out against its pastoral, cosy St Ives image, someone to make a gesture of defiance.¹⁴⁷ Even John Berger, a consistent and constant critic for many years, had written in 1952 that people looked at paintings by Bacon instead of going to Belsen. That angry flash of genius seemed to have sprung directly from the Holocaust. But then criticism became biographical and marginal considerations about the artist's life took over. The right man at the right time, it took until the retrospective in 2008 for that to be fully realized and acknowledged.

Yet back in 1945, by taking the Crucifixion, stripping out the Christianity, and turning it into a nihilistic, committed atheist's view of man's universal beastliness, this melancholy, utterly intense painter of pessimistic imagination portrayed all the horrors of the post-war world.¹⁴⁸ His prescience was timely but uncomfortable. Preoccupied by mortality and what he liked to call "the brutality of fact"¹⁴⁹ Bacon's world was peopled by threatening, ugly, obscene and terrifying figures trapped in claustrophobic spaces that encourage baser voyeuristic instincts. As with the painter's mulch of photographs and other imagery that he habitually collected and was haunted by, he "takes reality by surprise".¹⁵⁰ The Crucifixion was a recurring motif, redolent of Grünewald's syphilitic Christ and the Cimabue in Santa Croce that Bacon referred to as "a worm crawling down a cross". His iconography was the human scream; real howling, tormented, raw physical anguish that appears everywhere, is totally gripping, and makes my flesh creep.

Grotesque art is never pretty. Many great artists have found something to enjoy in images of pain. Friends and lovers, Popes and models, even businessmen; they are all presented by Bacon as deformed and distorted images of human decline: dissolving, disintegrating, and decomposing in paint before our eyes.¹⁵¹ The century's greatest iconoclast created some of its most iconic images, a human zoo to strike fear into our minds and gnaw away at our souls.

Relentlessly negative, Bacon's pictures can have a corrosive impact, seeing a lot of them together can be a numbing experience. What does horror mean any more when at the touch of a button, the amorality of the Internet serves up a continuing stream of evil and horror to anyone looking for it? Surely another car-crash Cardinal produced with painterly flair and an illusionist's skill will not really upset anyone? There is frequently less to his work than meets the eye but that is not to deny its power. He endowed the gruesome with a spurious glamour; his creatures smearing their way across the canvas, a visual orgy in paint constructed out of that mulch of reference material. He is impossible to imitate and impossible to ignore.

In 1949 Cyril Connolly had written in the last issue of *Horizon* "it is closing time in the gardens of the west and from now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair".¹⁵² Quality despair, that was Bacon. Fetishistic, full of menace, painful pleasures, guilt,

a sense of death close by, characters cry out for help, a visceral desire to be saved. He refused to interpret his work,¹⁵³ nevertheless he translated a morally bankrupt, spiritually empty world of atrocity into paint, and delivered the bad news about the world which most of us would rather not be confronted by too often. He assaults bourgeois sensibilities over and over again. He never stops. He hits you in the guts, sticks the knife in, and twists it endlessly.

The Church is in the dock along with the rest of humanity and found wanting. Fear of Hell has made man no less of a beast, prayers sanctify cruelty, confession brings indifference, this is art by a prophet in a pitiless world. And there are no witnesses; there is no grief, no dignity, no self-respect, simply unrelenting devastation. This a world where the door has been slammed shut on heroes, the Church's promise of redemption has disappeared, and we are left to contemplate a seemingly never-ending series of eviscerating portraits in No Man's Land.

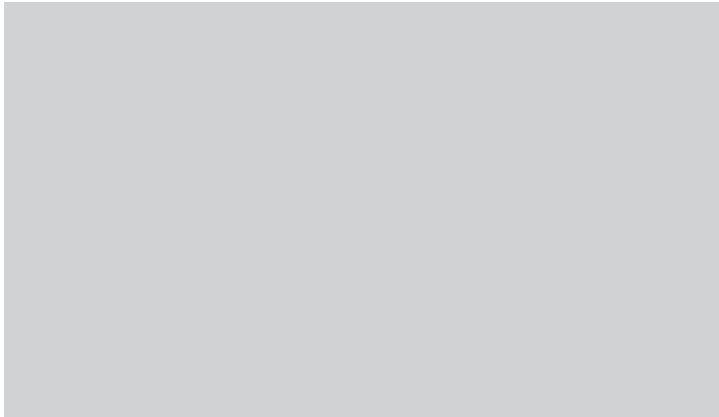
He created unforgettable images one would often like to forget, a great painter in a barren age, one devoid of spiritual values, in despair at itself. He seized the moment.

As a painter, he followed no one and he had no followers. He defies classification.¹⁵⁴ The English may have claimed him but his work was not in England's tradition.¹⁵⁵ Like many of the Anglo-Irish who are lost when it comes to their identity, he seemed to belong nowhere. His imagery and style are so individual as to be inimitable. Armed with little more than instinct he found an entirely new way of constructing images with enormous presence.¹⁵⁶ He exhibited no interest in the new art movements around him: conceptualism, installation art, earth art – art for those who had given up on painting. He simply kept going. He believed in the power of paint. And in so doing, he went 'over the top'. To paraphrase David Sylvester, winning involves knowing when to stop, Bacon hardly ever stopped in time.

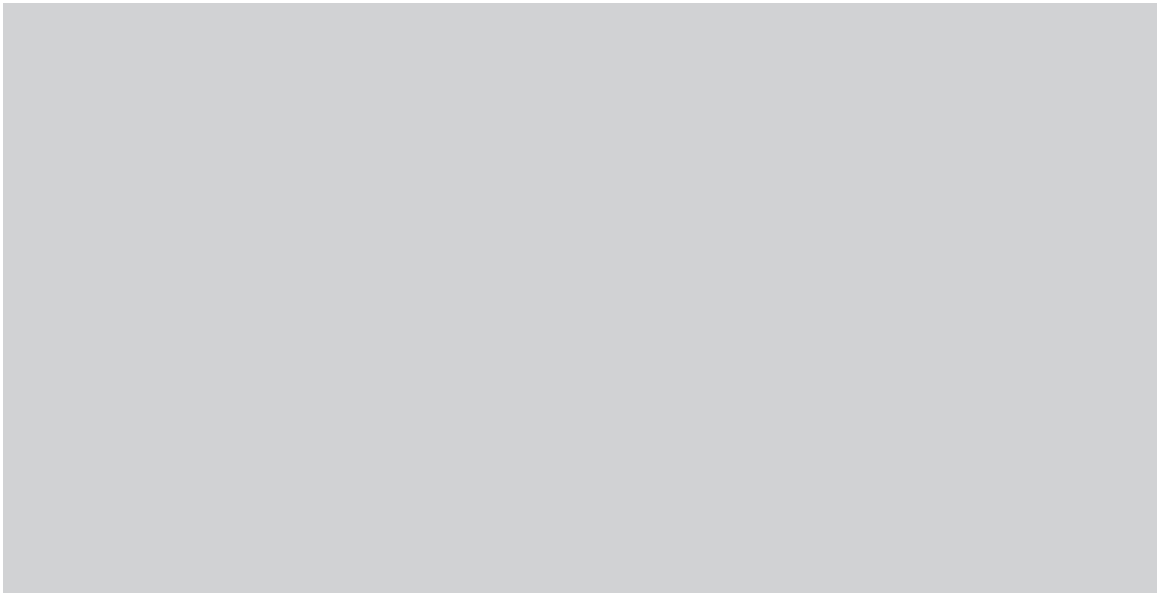
Alan Bennett's Wildean quip "when we are on our best behaviour we are not always at our best" surely applied to Francis Bacon. His private life was a major source of much of the imagery and energy in his paintings, that morbid taste for real violence. The imagery was the life. But his private life was a drama, frequently public, it coloured so much of the circus around him. Bacon was a true original, a Bohemian figure, wit, gossip, gambler, drinker, dissolute, an unstable, exhibitionist comedian, seemingly totally unshackled by the conventional ties that bind most people, a glamorous figure who lived life like a poor man with a lot of money, and very generous with it. He was renowned for his generosity. Such a character, his legendary presence must have evaporated the 'pea souper' gloom of London in the 1950s.

Paint, drink and be merry might have been his motto. He was a decadent painter as much as he was a painter of decadence. Then there was the other side: the vitriolic cynic, fond of cruel jokes, and at times a very cruel man. "Today Bacon has come to be seen in the blogosphere as a kind of Michael Jackson of art – an anomalous weirdo of divine power."¹⁵⁷ His own life was a brush with despair. And his view of life? – an ultimately futile journey that ends where it began offering a few fleeting pleasures along the way.¹⁵⁸

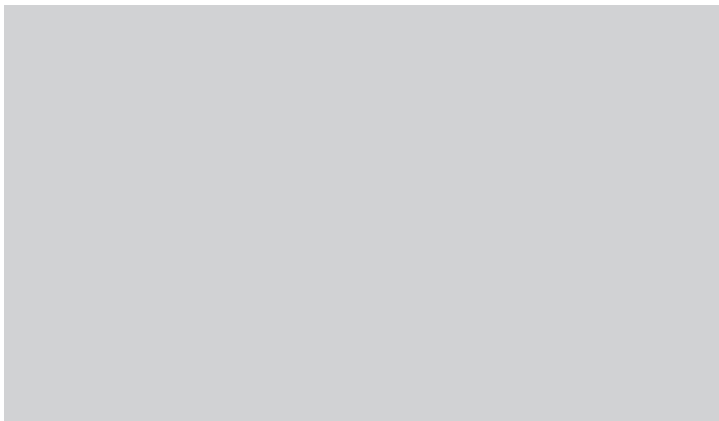
Bacon turned down all official honours. "Oh, I couldn't. So ageing!"¹⁵⁹



105 Examining Bacon's *Three studies for figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* at the Prado in Madrid, 2009 © 2014 Matias Costa for the New York Times



106 Examining 'the world's most expensive painting' in London 14 October 2013 *Three Studies of Lucian Freud* 1969 © Lefteris Piterakis/AP/Press Association Images



107 Auctioned for \$142.4m at Christie's, New York 12 November 2013 © 2014 Chang W Lee for the New York Times

A Man Alone: *The Tribulations of St Antony*¹⁶⁰

"Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence" Leon Bloy

THIS IS PAINTING as an act of worship. *The Tribulations of St Antony* by Bosch is not so much a work of magical realism as it is realist magic.¹⁶¹ It is "the absolute opposite of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*: resolute steadfastness as opposed to the debauchery of the sinner".¹⁶² It belongs to the same disturbing, imaginative world, yet in place of cavorting, self-indulgent happiness, 'living after the flesh' as St Augustine had it, we are looking directly at an object of faith, a pessimistic vision of a world in thrall to the Devil at a time of apocalyptic visions. Bosch is the artist par excellence of Antony, a cult figure in the artist's lifetime whose resolve in the face of all temptation suited the intensity of the times as it raced, spinning towards an apocalyptic Doomsday.

Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, written between 356AD and 362AD, is the archetypal staple of medieval popular clerical reading.¹⁶³ It is also the starting point for understanding Bosch. Athanasius had established the image of desert solitude; "the desert was made a city by monks" and the idea of spiritual literature being written by 'the desert fathers', both ideas some way from fact.¹⁶⁴ However, "the power of monks and hermits relied on their following Antony's heroic austerity."¹⁶⁵ Lives of the saints may have been formulaic but they did provide moralising entertainment in a fairly standard format: birth, origins, a struggle with diabolic adversaries, a personal armoury of miracles loosely based on a concoction of Bible stories, a routinely triumphant death, all leavened by some classical stories and Christian folk tales, with their relics left to be fought over. The influence of truth on these stories was fairly peripheral. With the universal belief that the end of the world was approaching, and the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, 'facts' were being marshalled to arm the penitent. Many of the 'lives' were largely fictitious, the various cults that grew up around specific saints resting on the miraculous cures wrought by contact with not only their bones but objects supposedly touched by the saint in question. Hence competition was keen. The life of Antony was the archetypal model. Athanasius was where it all began, the model Christian hagiography. His story of Antony has been called the most read book in the Christian world after the Bible. True or not, such a claim indicates how Antony's resistance to ferocious demons had the power to convert and inspire.¹⁶⁶

The inner conflict of the temptations driving Antony to become hermitic, matched the visions of the Devil and obsession with evil that drove Bosch. They were men alone. Antony sought solitude as a religious discipline, and with his subversion of pictorial conventions Bosch became a man apart, his pictorial authority an act of defiance in the face of tradition. Antony stares out at us from the centre of the triptych challenging us to confront our own inner eye of judgement. By confronting us with a holy figure who it was believed would respond to personal prayer, Bosch nevertheless devised a visual aid for meditation, an image for devotional contemplation that encouraged self-identification in line



with late medieval practice of *Andachtsbild*. This painting is an orthodox picture of St Antony mediating between man and God. A fourth century hermit, Antony was besieged by picturesque demons in the Egyptian desert, diabolic adversaries challenged him, and his only defence was an armoury of miracles on which he drew in order to confound the devils. At the time of Bosch he was popular as an agent of self-discipline, perseverance and steadfastness in the face of adversity. Coupled with his withdrawal from the world, he symbolised an ideal for those who saw the changing world as a place with which they were unable to come to terms.¹⁶⁷

Antony was not the first Christian hermit, the first seeking a solitary life or the first to be fascinated by severe, ascetic self-discipline. But his desire to live a Christian life away from everyone else led him eventually to the Egyptian desert. The burden of taxation and persecution led others to follow him until small communities became established, withdrawn from the world, the first monasteries.¹⁶⁸

This was some way from the basis on which the Church was organised, a Eucharistic community presided over by a bishop. However, Antony's story provided a model for monastic



108 Jheronimus Bosch *The Tribulations of St Antony* Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga

life, 20 years of lonely struggle with the demons of the desert, often in the form of wild animals, snakes and scorpions, together with a seductive woman. The Devil becomes so frustrated by his lack of success that he is reduced to a small black boy from Ethiopia, “black of mind”, a Prince of Darkness that would play to racist instincts.¹⁶⁹ Bosch put all this into paint.¹⁷⁰ And he gave us a great deal more than the narrative imagery centred on moral choice and temptation.

“There shall be then great tribulation”

FRA JOSÉ SIGÜENZA divided the paintings of Bosch into three: straightforward devotional images, the ingenious medley of jumbled images – the ‘more macaronic’ ones that reveal the haunting obsessions of the ‘inner man’, and the various temptations of St Antony.¹⁷¹ He is one of the few commentators who professed he had no problems with their interpretation. Sigüenza wrote about the popularity of Bosch in 16th century Spain, of ‘losing myself’ in his paintings,¹⁷²



109 Jheronimus Bosch *The Passion of Christ* Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga

and the attraction of Bosch's "unusual predilection for painting figures of graceful form placed in strange situations".¹⁷³ Obsession with the deadly sins and their eternal punishment were particularly attractive. And in St Antony, Bosch, the stern moralist haunted by the Devil, found a popular subject worthy of his imagination.¹⁷⁴ The grotesque Satanic creatures that close in on Antony were closing in on the artist, as confused and disturbed as the pious saint, certain in his faith, and not to be diverted from his quest for salvation whatever the temptation. The Lisbon triptych goes far beyond a simple recapitulation of the life of the saint. Yet explanations alchemical,¹⁷⁵ astrological,¹⁷⁶ Antonite,¹⁷⁷ Biblical,¹⁷⁸ Cathar,¹⁷⁹ chivalry- challenging,¹⁸⁰ Christologically-inverted,¹⁸¹ demonical,¹⁸² hallucinatory,¹⁸³ hermetical,¹⁸⁴ heretical,¹⁸⁵ magical, metaphorical, mystical, occultist, "phantasmogenic drugs",¹⁸⁶ proverbial, psychoanalytical,¹⁸⁷ Rosicrucian,¹⁸⁸ and unbalanced,¹⁸⁹ continue to appear in a continuous stream of theory and publication. But inner conflict is the most common explanation put forward. In the spirit of the times, however, it might also be considered "a last attempt to restore a faltering humanism and a troubling preface to the Renaissance"¹⁹⁰ – a painting on the cusp of the age that stresses the potential value and goodness of human beings whilst demonstrating the prime importance of the divine and the supernatural. We are confronted by Antony's saintly vision, an interior gaze of meditation, matched by his insight on the world, wrapped up together by Bosch in a pessimistic outlook typical of the age.

But where are we?

The landscape is disconcerting, the architecture ruined and bizarre.¹⁹¹ De Tolnay saw it as a magical space, less subject to the laws of gravity than the power of attraction between monstrous characters roaming a world in chaotic confusion. The battlefield where Antony's spiritual combat is fought out, a mortal conflict with a troop of hideous demons, is a wilderness. About the only thing that is certain is that we are faced with three of St Antony's tribulations. Tribulations because of the context in which the work was produced; it is a vision of great suffering during late medieval End-Time approaching the 'great tribulation' – when challenges far worse than anything Antony experienced were expected.¹⁹²

Bosch has moved on from the universal discourse of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, with its sweep of human history under some divine dispensation to one man's ordeal set out as an example to us all. Morbid fascination with unreal sensuality by a moralising satirist has given way to a more mature, entirely traditional and orthodox image of one man "as mediator between man and God".¹⁹³ Antony felt utterly abandoned, only severe self-discipline, deep contemplation, and spiritual contentment saw him through. According to Athanasius, what Antony was struggling with most of the time were visions.¹⁹⁴ Bosch gave form to those visions, as De Tolnay surmised, "This may be the reason why Bosch painted them as weightless, shimmering, seemingly empty apparitions."¹⁹⁵

As with so much of Bosch, God may be in the details but it is essential to grasp the overall concept before entering the overwhelming content of the painting. It is a pictorial narrative, a continuous image, one that has been read from both left to right and right to left. The torments of Antony echo the example of Christ, hence the outer wings of the triptych set the scene for what is to follow, the saint in the wilderness tempted beyond the endurance of ordinary humanity. And it is humanity rather than divinity that interests Bosch here, and in which he seems to despair – "the sparks of unfinished conflicts left sizzling in the air".¹⁹⁶

The complexity of the work that has given rise to so many explanations and theories centres on the open panels, overly meticulous study of individual scenes easily diverting attention from the overall theme.¹⁹⁷ When closed, the work does not appear so complex. The two grisaille scenes; *Christ's Arrest* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*, reflect Antony's inner torment. The medieval practice of identifying Antony with Christ, impervious to demonic assault, had reached the status of a cult at the time of Bosch. Christ is therefore firmly located here, outside the triptych, as

Antony's protector and inspiration. Once we arrive inside Christ has all but disappeared.

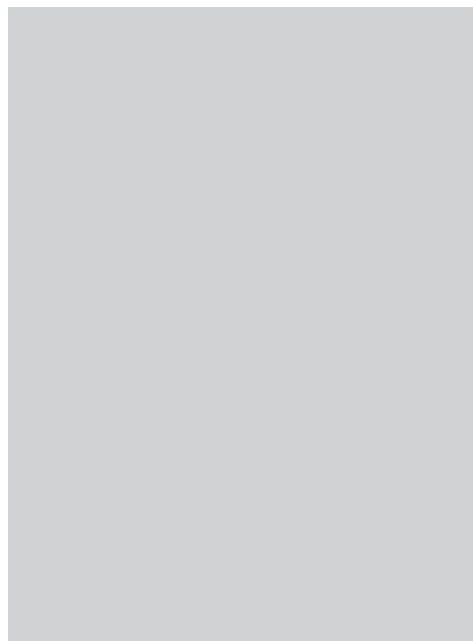
Antony demonstrates his victory over evil by raising his hand in blessing with the Lord in his shadow. This incorrectly led almost inevitably to suggestions that Bosch was a heretic, Sigüenza seeing this implied by Antony's visual elevation above Christ.¹⁹⁸ It is the extreme naturalism of Bosch's style that eludes some commentators.¹⁹⁹ The mass of naturalistic detail, unnatural but material beings, pieced together with artistic rather than nature's logic, nevertheless presented in a convincing package of Christian ideals that asserts a truly moralising, medieval spirit. Once opened the triptych shows those demons on the loose. The idea that devils kept records of everyone's sins was a widespread idea throughout the Middle Ages. In the left wing of the triptych Bosch shows a devil making records as an Antonite messenger skates towards it with a *protestatio*.²⁰⁰

Portents in the sky of the approaching apocalypse are heralded by the 'night riders' at the top of the inner left wing, fantastic airships cross the central sky, an air force of stratospheric demons clearly rule this great cosmic image, a vast and sweeping vision of the beliefs and fears of medieval mankind. Antony is clearly prey to the fears of the age, "fear of the unknown, dread of malignant powers beyond man's control, a debilitating fatalism engendered by belief in astrology, imminence of the ultimate cataclysm", a heterogeneous combination of ideas that demonstrate a medieval "scholastic mind steeped in the complex symbolism of the late fifteenth century".²⁰⁰

The impact of the airborne tribulations depicted by Martin Schongauer in his engraving of *St Anthony Tormented by Demons* c1470-75²⁰² caught the mood of the moment not only for Bosch but also Michelangelo, Dürer and 'Grünewald'.²⁰³ This print was in wide circulation within a decade of its being printed.²⁰⁴ The hermit saint locked in a mid-air tangle of straining pulsating figures, created a template that others copied and repeated for many years; in the case of Michelangelo for the rest of his life. For Bosch, by equating Antony's temptations with the Passion of Christ to such an extent: inside the temptations of sin and outside the salvation of Christ in his fight against sin; Anthony faces a sexually alluring woman, Christ meets Veronica; Antony falls inside the left wing just as Christ falls under the Cross outside. In so many ways, if not everything, Antony is demonstrated to mirror Christ, hence his status is advanced and he is set before us as an example to follow.



110 Engraving by Martin Schongauer
St Anthony Tormented by Demons



111 Michelangelo *The Torment of St Anthony*
Fort Worth, Kimball Art Museum



112 Jheronimus Bosch – tribulation in Lisbon,
Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga



113 St Anthony in
Venice. Bosch
The Hermit Saints
Palazzo Ducal



114 St Anthony in Madrid
The Temptation of St Anthony generally
considered to be by a follower of Bosch
Museo Nacional del Prado



115 St Anthony in Lisbon
Bosch *The Tribulations
of St Anthony*. Museu
Nacional de Arte Antiga



116 St Anthony in Berlin:
a disputed attribution to Bosch,
variously credited to assistants,
pupils, followers, copyists, and
forgers, etc. Kupferstichkabinett



117 St Anthony in Paris, Musée du Louvre
Studies for St Anthony and monsters
sometimes attributed to Jheronimus Bosch

The pessimism of the age embraces insanity

THE DEVIL was on the march. Mankind had little chance of salvation. Aquinas said as much, demons were everywhere: “all that happens visibly in this world can be done by demons”.²⁰⁵ On 9 December 1484 the Pope issued the Bull *Summis Desiderantes*. The handbook for witch hunters was published two years later, *Malleus Maleficarum*, the hammer of the witches.²⁰⁶ It was written out of an inquisitor’s experience of an earlier failed witch panic. In 1494 Brant had devoted an entire chapter about the Antichrist in *Das Narrenschiff*, outbreaks of the plague continually erupted as the century drew to a close, and *The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* based on predictions of 16 conjunctions in Pisces in February 1524, was revived and printed to capitalise on the fears of the approach of Doomsday. Horoscopes, calendars, almanacs, stellar doctrines of every kind were all the rage. Bosch followed convention, “the established lines of Antonite iconography”²⁰⁷ and gave his own interpretive twist to the social mores of the age, with Christian virtues overturned by the sin of the world. In fact he could, as in Gibbon’s phrase, go so far as to suspend the laws of nature for the benefit of the Church.

“The growth of belief in witchcraft and other aspects of magic served to confuse and further hinder medieval man from achieving his salvation. Sin became more complex even as the possibilities for committing sin increased in number.”²⁰⁸ The conflict between good and evil, and the belief in the Devil’s powers augmented by magic, astrology, mathematics, and alchemy, drove a belief in the power of evil to transform mankind into animals, of demons having sex with men and women while they slept, of power over the weather, ideas propounded by St Augustine and furthered by Thomas Aquinas who went so far as to expound the theory that through performing miracles, demons could hand the world into the power of the Devil.²⁰⁹

The outbreak of hysteria in Arras in 1459 following the death of a quarter of the population there through plague and famine, and the tortured confession of a hermit admitting attendance at a service of Devil worship, ushered in a descent into barbarism leading to witch-burning and rabid anti-Semitism taking hold, of which Bosch would inevitably have heard.²¹⁰

It was a climax of horror. The pessimism of the age was ready to embrace such insanity. The Inquisitor of Arras, spurred on by two Dominicans who “believed that a third of the population of Europe were secret witches” led to a conviction that “anyone against burning witches was also a witch”.²¹¹ The madness that gripped the town ran unabated for months before Philip the Good intervened and in 1461 the *Parlement* of Paris secured the release of those still imprisoned. Cuttler interprets the central panel of the *St Antony triptych* to consider that Bosch may well have witnessed or even “participated” in the events at Arras.²¹² As far-fetched as such a claim may be, far from being “a pictorial attack upon popular superstitions” it would seem to be an endorsement of topical belief. Bosch aligned witchcraft with heresy together with the heretical practices of sorcery and magic. Huizinga has written that “people oscillate between the fear of hell and the most naïve joy, between cruelty and tenderness, between harsh asceticism and insane attachments to the delights of the world, between hatred and goodness, always running to extremes”. The artist for those extremes was Bosch. He reflected the knowledge, fear and practice of witchcraft that haunted the end of the Middle Ages, and haunted, he saw Antony as a way out.



118 *Witches* a pen and ink drawing once attributed to Jheronimus Bosch. Paris, Musée du Louvre.

“While this kind of presentation of old women as malevolent or mischievous conjurers has become commonplace since then, at the time of Bosch it was radically new” Larry Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p288

Entr'acte **Bill Viola**

The need for reflection

IN 2000 TO CELEBRATE the millennium, the National Gallery staged *Encounters: new art from old*, 24 commissions to create new work in response to its collection. In *Remembrance of Art Past*, his introduction to the catalogue, Robert Rosenblum wrote "Of the abiding myths of modern art, one of the most stubborn would tell us that artists of the last two centuries kept unburdening themselves of the past, hoping forever to wipe their eyes clean of history". He later points out that the burden of art history can become so overwhelming that the very idea of innovation risks being stifled by ever accelerating knowledge of the past. The resulting exhibition was very uneven in quality. However, in choosing *Christ Mocked* by Jheronimus Bosch as his point of departure, Bill Viola began work on *The Quintet of the Astonished*, the first in a series of films he later called *The Passions* that explored the power, range and expression of conflicting human emotions from sorrow to bliss.²¹³

Viola has been working with video for 40 years. There is no one quite like him, he has been called the Rembrandt of video art and credited with re-inventing the language of art no less. As someone from California devoted to Buddhism, Sufism, and Christian mysticism, he has also been criticised for offering "no more than vacant exaltation and fast food spirituality."²¹⁴

Viola claims not to be a devout Christian but has also spoken of "living through the resurrection every spring, human beings are constantly reborn" and the "hope of renewal".²¹⁵ Every spring, for Christians, the spirituality demanded of Holy Week is different to anything else. Everything is stripped bare. Clear-eyed intellectual conviction goes out of the window. If faith is to mean anything at all, it is about waiting and trust, a willingness to stay the course, a refusal to let go of the promise. Unlike those on either side of the God debate who think the whole thing is some clever argument to be won or lost, this trust may be all faith is – or indeed ever claimed to be. To appreciate Viola we too have to stay the course.²¹⁶

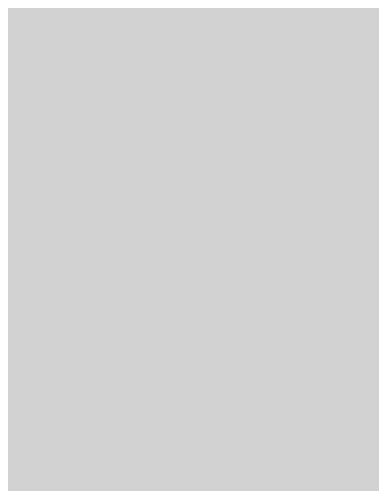
Surpassing all others in standards of technical excellence and innovation his films have focused more and more on references to art history, narrative, the human figure and portraiture. Religion has been an increasing touchstone for his art. Existing imagery has become the visual template for his personal reinterpretations of Christianity. A picture of Christ as "the calm at the centre of a storm",²¹⁷ the Bosch painting (not always securely attributed) shows Him at the moment of the Passion just after He met Veronica on the road to Calvary. Viola had already made several films that were related to specific paintings, most significantly *The Greeting* in 1995 inspired by Pontormo's *Visitation* c1528-9 where a 40 second encounter between three women lasts over ten minutes. The films are not costume dramas; they reinterpret the "aesthetic criteria of a more traditional medium and in so doing extending the possibilities of both the old and the new forms".²¹⁸

That reinterpretation is fantastically moody, and very, very slow. It is hypnotic. Sometimes the image appears motionless, the slightest of movements giving the impression of even greater stillness than a fixed image ever could. In other words, Viola demands we give him our time. He forces us to stop and wait and watch, to take our time, to think and to be still, precisely what the Church has been trying to do for centuries. Thus Viola does not feed impatient egos, always greedy for the next experience or glittering distraction. His work takes its lead from contemplative prayer and the discipline of silence. It demands we remove ourselves from the perpetual maelstrom where the big questions of life are easily and conveniently dodged. The enormous intensity of Viola's work, accentuated by the hyper-slow motion, is always completely absorbing, a mesmerising ritual of grief.²¹⁹

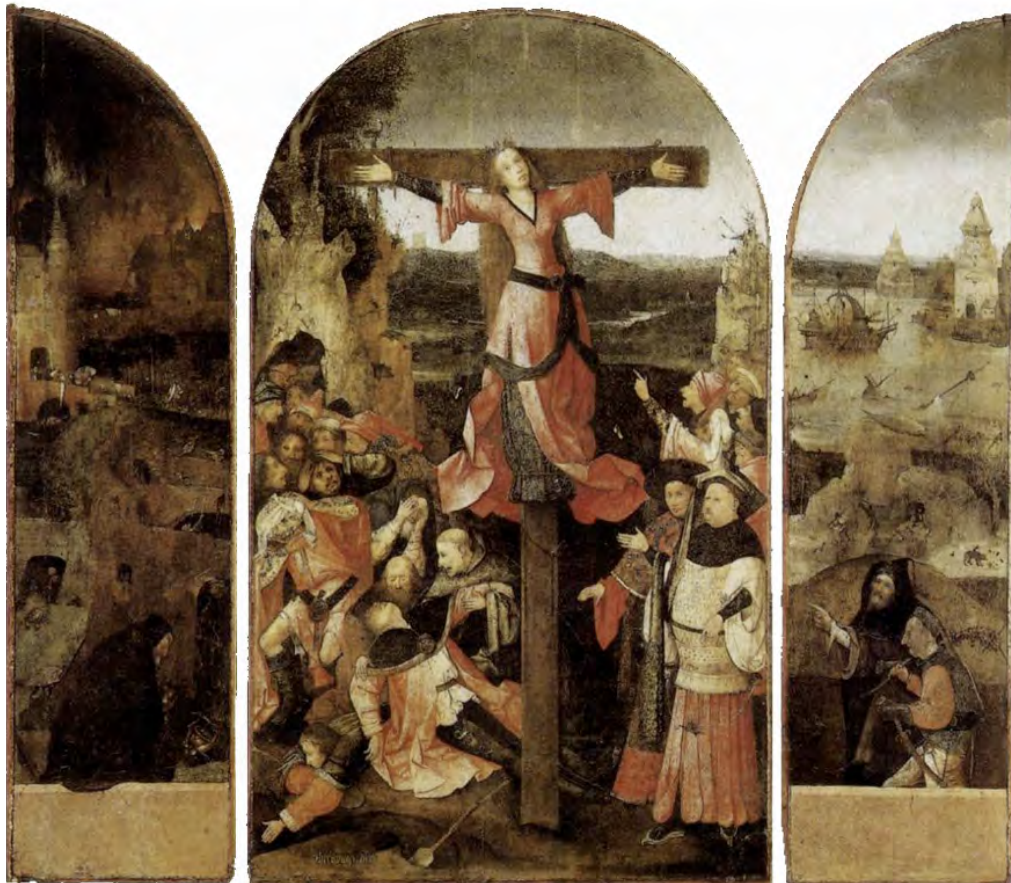
It is moving, frequently bringing us into the presence of the tragic, where the only thing one can do is shed a tear, whisper a prayer or hold someone's hand.

Great art can seldom do more than that.

119 Bill Viola
The Quintet of the Astonished 2000.
 Color video rear projection on screen
 mounted on wall in dark room.
 Projected image size: 1.4 x 2.4 m;
 room dimensions variable.
 Performers: John Malpede,
 Weba Garretson, Tom Fitzpatrick,
 John Fleck, Dan Gerrity.
 15:20 minutes. Photo: Kira Perov



120 *Mater Dolorosa*
 attributed to
 Workshop of Dieric Bouts.
 Art Institute of Chicago



121 Jheronimus Bosch *The Crucified Female Martyr* Venice, Palazzo Ducale



122 Jheronimus Bosch *The Hermit Saints* Venice, Palazzo Ducale

Foreign affairs – a Roman Holiday

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page” St Augustine

“The wise man travels to discover himself” James Russell Lowell

THERE ARE TWO PERIODS in the life of Bosch when it appears he went AWOL – ‘absent without leave’. There are no references to his life for the years 1474-81 and 1499-1503.²²⁰ What could have happened to him? Very little is known about the life of Bosch but in many ways it is still more documented than some of his contemporaries. Nevertheless we still do not know what he did in the missing years. Estimates of his birthday have varied between 1449 and 1462. The legal age of maturity fluctuated by as much as seven years during his lifetime so guesses based simply on transactional documentation can only provide guidance. They are not proof positive of anything, they can only be partial evidence, and thus, as with everything about Bosch, the lack of documentary evidence about his life has given rise to considerable speculation. Take one example: Bernard Aikema has concluded that “the relationship between Hieronymus Bosch and Renaissance Northern Italy was only slight and indirect”.²²¹ Maybe, and yet again, maybe not.

We can agree to disagree. The Eternal City beckoned.

The question is what would a deeply religious person do, one with the financial means of Bosch, at the end of the 15th century – given the opportunity? The Church had lost much of its prestige and control by the end of the century. The glory of the medieval papacy was past, yet the end of the world was approaching, perpetual damnation in Hell awaited – and the Church could still save you. The Devil incarnate was advancing west into the heart of Europe in the form of the infidel – the Turk; Islam was on the march. In this time of extreme pessimism, the pre-Reformation period, St Augustine’s legacy of an uncertain future, where one suffered, a pilgrim on the way to one’s Last Judgement, without a role in determining what was going to happen, everyone, however difficult this is to comprehend today, obeyed the Church. And however unsatisfactory that might seem to us today, there was no alternative.

The Renaissance may well have been an age filled with contradictions, but belief in the Christian God was unquestioned. If one’s priest spoke of the duty of every Christian to go to Rome once before they died, especially beneficial in the year of 1500 when through the goodness of the Holy Father one could obtain an indulgence that would shorten significantly one’s time in Purgatory, and one was as devout as Bosch, had the time and the money, there is no question what one would try to do. Notwithstanding the terrible accident in 1450 when a crowd of several hundred pilgrims died on the bridge of Sant’ Angelo, one would want to go to Rome. There would not be another opportunity in the lifetime of Bosch. He owned property, had married well and in Jacob Monicx had not only a neighbour, but had found a potential sponsor and also the ideal companion. Not only did Monicx’s coat of arms identify him as a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, he had already visited the Holy Land. Lodewijk Beys (Buys or Beijs), another neighbour of Bosch, went three times in 1500, 1504, and 1513. A fellow member of the Confraternity of Our Lady, the priest Henric van der Loo, set out in 1500 and died whilst on the road. Willem van Brakel went and returned safely when Bosch was a teenager. In 1511 Henrick van Deventer went with his family. Between 1400 and 1614 some 36 citizens of ’s-Hertogenbosch made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They travelled via Venice. Holy tourism was set to take off and the pilgrim business developing fast (see chapter 2).²²² The packaged pilgrimage for these proto-Holidaymakers sent pilgrims off, not to get a tan but to collect a visa to the life to come. They went not only to Jerusalem but the Mont St Michel, Santiago de Compostela, to Rome, and elsewhere. Why should Bosch not take advantage of all this? In every other way, the life of Bosch mirrored the hopes and fears of the waning Middle Ages. He would

have wanted to set out for Rome.

In 1300 Pope Boniface VIII had proclaimed a jubilee of indulgences to provide the Curia with some income.²²³ This papal megalomaniac would be arrested in September 1303 and die within a month. However, his initiative for centennial celebrations, later named Holy Years and *annus jubileus*, continued.²²⁴ The years between each Jubilee have varied from 25 to 100 years (in 1389 Urban VI had made it 33 years to mirror the lifetime of Christ) and on 19 April 1470 Paul II fixed it at 25 years. The year 1500 was an extraordinary jubilee. The ritual devised by John Burckard for Rodrigo de Borgia, Alexander VI, began on Christmas Eve 1499 with the Pope seeking entry to St John Lateran via a walled up door, the *porta aurea*. The Pope struck the wall with a hammer and the 'Holy Door' was opened by masons, a choir chanted *Tē Deum laudamus* and the Pope passed through the opening and celebrated Vespers. This doorway was not closed until the Solemnity of Epiphany 1501.²²⁵ Why should Bosch not have attempted to be in Rome some time between these two dates? It could be argued that it is incumbent on those who disagree with this proposition to set out why he would not have set out on a pilgrimage. So far, so plausible. But there is another question.

Assuming he set out, why did Bosch not complete his grand tour? Why is it unlikely he ever made it to Rome? Why did he stop in Venice? What could stop Bosch and Monicx continuing to Rome? War. Political conflict impacted on the territorial integrity of the Italian states with alliances in flux as various states negotiated support to ensure their security.²²⁶ Allied with France, Milan and Venice, the Papal armies under the *gonfaloniere* of Cesare Borgia, the standard-bearer, were at war with Naples. The French armies occupied Milan in April 1500 and fighting ensued across Romagna. To reach Rome meant crossing a battlefield. Faced with the uncertainties of war it is conceivable that even the most religious and wealthy might pause and reconsider.²²⁷ By the end of 1500 the only major players left were Venice and the Papal States, but by then our duo would have set out for home. Florence was shuttling between Republican and Medici rule while the Church wrestled with stirrings of Reformist dissent.²²⁸

To make the journey across Europe and over the Alps into Italy, to admire the artistic treasures of Venice, Florence and Rome would, for our rich, religious and artistic couple, have been a dream come true, far more than the standard excursion for the merely wealthy. They travelled to be inspired – and to be saved. Italy would have sounded like a place of wonders, classical tradition, mystical mathematical ideas, musical harmony, magical art and architecture. It would have been a tough journey but its lure must have seemed irresistible. There is considerable circumstantial evidence to support this theory, starting with two signed works in the possession of Cardinal Domenico Grimani.²²⁹ These are the two triptychs, *The Hermit Saints* and *The Crucified Female Martyr*.²³⁰ In addition the four panels generally referred to as *Visions of the Hereafter* are considered to have been a part of Grimani's collection together with a lost work referred to by Michiel as *Fortune with the whale swallowing Jonah*.

The Crucified Female Martyr triptych has been variously identified as St Julia, St Eulalia or St Wilgefortis (also known as Ontkommer in the Low Countries, Uncumber in England and Liberata in Italy), saints with connections to Italy, Spain and the Low Countries respectively.²³¹ The obscure, the fourteen-year old or the bearded – we can take our pick. Choosing which of these three very rare saints in the history of art might appeal to Bosch more, from the dubious legend of a Carthaginian noble, a girl subjected to 13 tortures, then nailed to a *crux decussata*, and finally decapitated, or a 14th century cult figure, is a question unresolved by the historians who have tried. Other even more obscure crucified women have also been identified as possible subject matter.²³² Damaged, overpainted (perhaps by Bosch himself according to some critics), the composition is disjointed, the figures in the side panels out of proportion, the panels unconnected,²³³ the donors' portraits painted out,²³⁴ the panels reused,²³⁵ the result is something of a mess – yet it is signed, and universally accepted as genuine. The question of the

subject's identification is important because if it is not Wilgefortis, then the most likely is Julia, someone unknown in Northern Europe at the time.²³⁶ This geographical problem defeats those who would argue that Bosch did not travel to Italy.²³⁷

Just as damaged, overpainted and retouched, signed, cut down but later 'filled in', is a more straightforward triptych of Saints Anthony, Jerome and Giles, *The Hermit Saints*, in Venice. All of these saints are voices in the wilderness. And they were all in Venice by 1521.²³⁸ The other major work is *Visions of the Hereafter*. It lacks a central panel, generally assumed to be a *Last Judgement* (see chapter 3). If Grimani did not commission the pictures then he had to obtain them from somewhere, through a third party, possibly a merchant. Because Aikema likes to back the intuition of Lorne Campbell speaking in London in 2000 with regards the travels of the Flemish entrepreneur Daniel van Bomberghen, he concludes the works by Bosch could not have been in Venice before 1516. This is just being selective with the speculation on offer, and is very convenient if you are looking to deny Bosch ever left the Low Countries. Analysis resulting from the results of dendrochronology to pinpoint the date of an artwork's execution are debateable, but at least the dates arrived at, *after which* they must have been painted, comply with the paintings in Venice – and the stylistic evidence also points to similar dates for these works.²³⁹

The impact of Italy on Bosch has been noted since De Tolnay and the influence of Bosch in Italy has been noted on Raphael, c1500 *St Michael* in the Louvre. Slatkes takes this a great deal further with Leonardo, Campagnola, Giorgione, Savoldo (from Brescia and thus connects with St Julia), and Dürer after his second visit to Venice, c1506 *Young Christ Among the Doctors* clearly relates to the Ghent half-length *Christ Carrying the Cross*, a cut down painting attributed to Bosch as a late work or a copy (see chapter 1).²⁴⁰ Of course, he takes it too far but the argument is not as unsound as some would have it.²⁴¹ One thing that did coincide with his 'disappearance', or his return from Italy, was his name.

I attach far less significance to the signature on a work than others (forging a signature is far easier than a painting, and the signature of Bosch is a particularly easy one to counterfeit)²⁴² but it is at this point after the turn of the century, that the name Bosch first appears and is used consistently afterwards.²⁴³ A new name implies a new confidence. The decision to take a new name says "I am my own man" and want to be considered as such. It signifies separation from the family workshop, the need or desire to market work independently, the wish to be seen as a separate 'brand' by potential patrons – the man who came from nowhere, and had made his name to such an extent that he was the sixth richest guy in town, had finally arrived. What better time to take such a momentous decision, to break from the family business, than during a period of reflection on an extended journey away from home? His art certainly has links to the art of his time, but by 1500 there really were no visible connections or stylistic points of contact. His originality was there for all to see. Art history may be at something of a loss with Bosch as Marijnissen commented, but just think of his impact at the time. He knew he was special and it was about time to announce the fact.²⁴⁴

If Bosch made the journey, why are there no drawings to support this theory? To which the response is, why not ask the same of Bruegel? Much of the 'documentary evidence' of drawings undertaken on his supposed travels now turn out not to be by him at all. So if Bruegel's notebooks are lost (or never existed), why not those of Bosch half a century earlier? And if we accept an Italianate content to some of the work of Bruegel, we can counter with the argument of the very early influence of Bosch on Italian art. Take your pick. That Bosch travelled to Italy is as likely, if not more so, than Bruegel. Indeed, it can be argued more likely. Absence of proof may well not be the same as proof of absence, but considerable investigation has yielded insufficient evidence to prove the proposition satisfactorily true or false. Carl Sagan referred to this as 'impatience with ambiguity' and in 1620 Francis Bacon that 'what a man had rather were true he more readily believes. Therefore he rejects difficult things from impatience

of research; sober things, because they narrow hope; the deeper things of nature, from superstition; the light of experience, from arrogance and pride; things not commonly believed, out of deference to the opinion of the vulgar. Numberless in short are the ways, and sometimes imperceptible, in which the affections colour and infect understanding'.²⁴⁵ There is nothing wrong with circumstantial evidence in the right circumstances.

That Bosch went to Italy is one of those 'difficult things' – a thing 'not commonly believed'. It may well simply be unknowable. The burden of proof is as great on either side of the argument. The proposition Bosch went to Italy has not been disproven, scholars have generally considered it unlikely. But because it has not been proven does not make the idea false. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*.²⁴⁶

It is our job to ask questions. That is what we do. The answers are full of probabilities and maybes and not exactlys. There are rarely any definite answers to be found. There is always a lack of evidence. There is sadly a lack of drawings. One day someone will find the proof, but for now, on balance, there is every reason to believe Bosch went to Italy. "The Renaissance came late to Venice."²⁴⁷ As someone out of step with the new world, it would have suited Bosch.

A Venetian footnote

SYMBOLS IN BOSCH continue to be subject to diverse interpretation. However, among many suggestions with regards the *St Antony triptych* the red-cloaked top-hatted cripple has been seen as a devil, or even the Devil, directing a witches' Sabbath like some master magician²⁴⁸ as his wand (his crutch) points towards the main scene frequently interpreted as a 'black mass' attended by devils in the form of bodiless monsters – the *grillo*.

On the left hand panel, the saint, supported by three men after jousting with flying demons and coming off worse, crosses a bridge, underneath which a group of devils study a written document as a fourth figure wearing a red coat skates towards them carrying a sealed document in its beak. This red-coated devil-messenger manikin wears a badge on his coat. The letter and the badge continue to attract a great deal of interpretation and evaluation.

The coat does not. In eight pages about this figure Bax does not even mention the colour of the coat in his extended interpretation of the 'Antichrist's messenger' – *Antkerst bode*.²⁴⁹ With everything analysed in the smallest detail, does Bax think the colour arbitrary, the artist perhaps merely considering a splash of colour at this point to be a good idea? Elsewhere, Bax continually comments about the significance of colour. Above this messenger, across the bridge and ahead of Antony, is a house. A man's backside forms part of the roof as he crawls in the mud. A flag, possibly in the colours of Austria, possibly of jesters, possibly symbolic of sin, flies from the man's thigh. Some sexual symbolism seems to indicate this is a brothel, and a diabolic blue-hooded monk is being encouraged forward by two red-cloaked devil-clerics. Bax acknowledges the red cloaks without passing comment, except to say that one figure could, due to his red robe, be a cardinal, whereas the one "who points invitingly to the brothel with his satanic hand" and is also swathed in red, might be a bishop.

On the right wing, amid scenes redolent of sodomy and gluttony, Antony tries to study. And here, there is another figure in red, this time a dwarf-like monster using a walking frame, and attached to a whirligig similar to that of the artist's enigmatic child in Vienna (see chapter 1). In both cases the child's windmill has been interpreted as a symbol of folly. Again the colour of its red-hooded frock goes unacknowledged. To the left a procuress pours wine, as she attempts to entice Antony towards a naked woman who peers out from the cleft in a tree, that some see as reminiscent of a vagina. Antony attempts to avoid seduction by turning away from contemplating the temptation.²⁵⁰ The look on his face makes it clear this is not easy. A large

piece of red fabric is draped across the tree and the devil-queen. Bax calls it a curtain, and again he does not refer to the colour²⁵¹ but elsewhere does refer to the beggar with a red shield in the centre panel with reference to the double meaning of the word rooi meaning both red and poverty.²⁵²

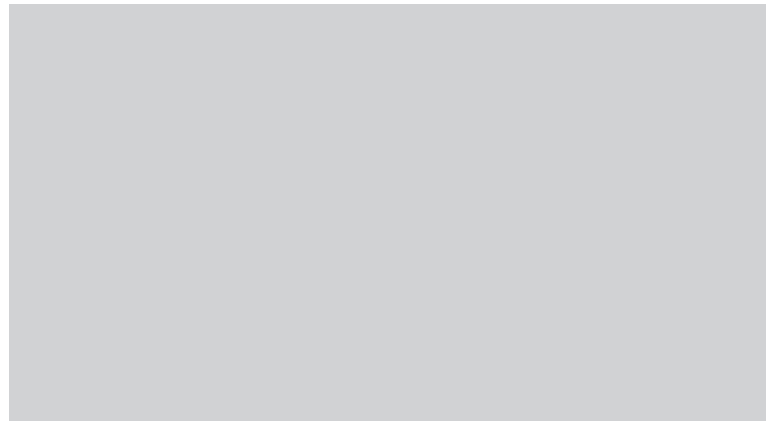
But red is consistently the colour of evil in this triptych.²⁵³ The muted overall grey-green ground is populated by the sharper colours that make the figures stand out, and the slabs of red work well in balancing the composition. Nevertheless, why red?

An explanation may be found in the visit to Venice possibly made by Bosch in 1500, four years before this painting was arguably executed. Jews lived in Venice from the 12th century; by 1152 the population was around 1300, and by 1500 they lived across the city, such tolerance of Christ's killers being interpreted as probably responsible for a series of military defeats the Republic suffered as the wrath of God turned on His chosen city. Unusually for a Christian state Jews enjoyed the protection of the law.²⁵⁴ However, even before they were segregated, they were made to wear red coats and hats.²⁵⁵

Elsewhere in Europe when forced to wear some identificant, the colour for Jews was yellow, but in Venice it was red, until later in the 16th century when this was changed to yellow to avoid confusion – with cardinals. If Bosch did not go to Venice, how did he learn of such a relatively insignificant detail?



123 The red-coated Devil in the *St Anthony triptych*



124 The red-coated girl in the ghetto, a still from *Schindler's List* 1993 Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC
© 1993 Universal City Studios, Inc. and Amblin Entertainment, Inc



125, 126 The red-coated dead child and the murderous, red-coated devil dwarf
Stills from *Don't Look Now* © British Lion Films 1973 and Studio Canal

The world according to Bosch – encounters with God

"I was with the devil, and I put my hand up to God" Mario Sepúlveda Espinace²⁵⁶

"... And heaven knows I'm miserable now" The Smiths

ART MATTERED, because the assemblage of things in pictures gathered people together for intercourse. Intercourse, as was admirably pointed out by Vanhaelen and Wilson, can mean so much more than sex.²⁵⁷ Earlier in this chapter, 'the viewer as voyeur' implied that there was a decidedly erotic undercurrent to some of the work. Many commentators labour this point whilst, as has been pointed out, it is all in their minds; Bosch does not show any sexual acts, he suggests, conjures, evokes, implies, and indicates, to the point at which he puts ideas into people's heads that compel them towards the 'erotics of looking'. The idea of an intensely sensuous engagement with a picture as a collaborative process led by the pleasures and inclinations of the audience engaging socially is of interest as it extends the concept of devotional object as aid to devotion and inspiration for meditation into *The Garden of Earthly Delights* where it might serve as both. But, and we should always come back to this, what is the story, and what has the artist done to sustain attention?

It is all in the telling. We put ourselves in the story when we look at the picture, then we have to figure out our part in it, and then how to tell ourselves the story. The picture *is* a story. These stories are geography, and our ability to understand it at all is first of all an act of imagination as we attempt to gain our bearings. That imagination is also the storyteller's art, and a way of travelling from here to there. Bosch gives us clues. Frequently, he gives only so much away. It is only the outline of a story. It is as if he wants viewers to create their own narrative. It is a discussion, intercourse. In so doing, he is not so mysterious as his work often suggests. The pictures open up to be read like a Russian doll, opening out and then closing up again, elaborate palindromes that double back on themselves, mirror structures of sets of nested stories, echoes of images rebounding, things reverberating and repeating, like a plaything with manifold layers of diverse meaning the viewer has to explore in order to uncover the concealed imagery and interpret it. He often brings the remote within our reach, makes the obscure accessible, suggests that the faraway is somehow nearby.

Purgatory will be our jumping off point if only we are ready to board at the gateway to experience to the afterlife. Scared, angry, vulnerable, challenged, frightened, at the mercy of the Devil, his audience had only to deal with it all as bravely as they could. Their resilience and dignity defined them. If they failed at the last, the feeling was they could not have struggled or battled hard enough. But they would not have felt particularly brave. They had no choice but to engage in the battle with evil. His audience was at the mercy of the Devil, there would be winners and losers and you simply had to fight for your place in the world to come. For them this was being realistic, making decisions on a rational basis, but as the turn of the century approached they were in panic, not cowardly but courageous and Bosch gave them some ammunition with which to engage in the fight.

For us, Bosch presents an image of the past and the future colliding. The power of the artist's imagination brings to life the reservoir of fragmentary signals stored in the brain that coalesce and dissolve as part of the memory bank held by everyone in his audience, then and now. Audiences have always been active, but today they can make an impact.²⁵⁸ It is unusual, to say the least, that 'the people formerly known as the audience' have become a crucial ingredient again in some contemporary art, just as in the 15th and 16th centuries pictures were produced to promote "dialogue that occurred between viewers in front of pictures and the way in which pictorial strategies facilitated their visual experience and challenged their analytical

capabilities".²⁵⁹ At issue were "the habits of mind brought to the act of looking, and what questions or revelations the image was likely to have addressed or inspired for its contemporary viewer".²⁶⁰ The nature of this audience-centred participatory theatrical art may have changed, but the audience as art movement has made a return.²⁶¹

We are once again trying to locate the art of meaning, something suggested earlier that lies in the relationship between the artwork and the observer. Hannah Arendt maintained that 'things' occupy the spaces between people, the in-between spaces of engagement, where it was suggested the art of meaning was located – at the beginning of this book.²⁶² The power of the image to penetrate the obscure areas of one's own hidden motivations, to intrude on everyone's own version of the truth, for us requires 'a willing suspension of disbelief' whereas for the contemporaries of Bosch it was all too real.²⁶³ There really were witches, fairies, devils stalking the earth, the end of the world and much, much more, fast approaching. The compact that we enter into as we follow the narrative the artist presents us with also involves that willing suspension of disbelief. That compact has meaning of itself.

We live a life of narratives. The only way we can understand things is through stories; for story-telling to do its job successfully it needs attentive participants, and this necessitates a willing suspension of disbelief on their part. People choose to suspend their disbelief. That is why we have paintings, they are visual stories. They are not fairy stories.²⁶⁴ We know the painting is not true. That we treat it as real does not mean we suspend reason or critical intelligence. It may not be plausible, but it is predicated on the basis that it was painted to represent a world that did exist. The paintings represented the mental universe of 15th century spiritual pilgrims of the imagination as they undertook the Grand Tour. The paintings were designed to elicit prayerful responses as the viewers journeyed forth, to meet the meditative needs of the virtual pilgrims as they contemplated the life of Christ. Along the way, as part of their devotional practice, the travel accounts of actual pilgrims were transformed into guidebooks for spiritual pilgrims, literature that served up pictures in words, to augment the real pictures in front of them.²⁶⁵ For the viewer, the outside world no longer exists, all that matters is in front of your eyes: this is your temporary reality and you live it. With prayer and passion. They entered a world of real make-believe. And for us, the distant world of pilgrimages, relics, and indulgences is brought to life. Just as that world, and these pictures, together with their original audience, may be a puzzle for us to unravel, so we may appreciate better that faith itself is a perpetual argument about meaning and reality.

"What is truth?" Pilate asked Jesus in response to Christ stating, "for this I came into the world; that I should give testimony to the



127 Frankfurt, Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie *Ecce Homo*

truth”.²⁶⁶ We might consider Pilate’s rhetorical question as God winking at us, a stage whisper, an artful aside, in effect saying beware anyone who thinks they have all the answers; only I do. Jesus justified his doctrine when he said “the truth shall make you free” as reported by John.²⁶⁷ At best, we are with Paul, we can ‘only see through a glass darkly’.²⁶⁸ The truth of the matter is we cannot visit the past. Yet with Bosch we do. Difficult as it may be to come to terms with, he delivers us into a place incomprehensible to us, thus if we wish to understand what drove him, we have to enter that world as best we can so as to appreciate what his audience found emotionally true in the face of the irreconcilable contradictions they observed in the world around them. With Bosch we are a long way from bedtime prayers, and no time for listening to bedtime fairy tales.

Do artists own their own stories or do the stories own them? Is there such a thing as emotional copyright? As we look and wonder what it is all about, why is memory a teasing resource? Can we appreciate that the more uncomfortable the content, the more Bosch seems to be in his element? Do we understand his drive to control an out-of-control experience? The power of detail in the imagery draws us in so effectively that it makes the missable unmissable. We enter into the narrative, and just as there is a truth in the stories that resonates with the audience, so it does with a picture. We just keep looking until we think we have seen it all.

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- 1 L P Hartley *The Go-Between* 1953 p7 the first line of the book.
 - 2 TS Eliot *Burnt Norton* (No 1 of *Four Quartets*)
 - 3 ‘tales told so truthfully that their readers could no longer evade it’ is a phrase attributed to Anton Chekhov.
 - 4 Baruch Spinoza *Ethics* (Part III, Proposition XVIII, Proof) ed transl Andrew Boyle and GHR Parkinson 1993. The proposition continues: “Wherefore the image of the thing is considered in itself is the same whether it refers to time present, past, or future, that is the constitution of the body, or, the emotion is the same whether the image of the thing be present, past, or future. And so the emotion of pleasure or pain is the same whether the image of the thing be present, past, or future.”
 - 5 *The Haywain* used to be located in the centre of the room with both inner and outer panels viewed easily, but since the room was rehung following the Prado’s extension in 2007 none of the triptychs are located where they would benefit from 360 degree views. Exhibited as a tabletop *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* now has unwarranted importance in the centre of the room based on the belief it was ‘hung’ in the apartments of Philip II in the Escorial. See chapter 1 ‘The ‘third eye’ of the artist’.
 - 6 Genesis 2:8 The original English translation of the Vulgate, the Douay-Rheims Bible, toned this down to “paradise of pleasure” Baronius 2007 edition, pp 6-7
 - 7 Walter S Gibson ‘The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch: Iconography of the Central Panel’ *NKJ* 1973 vol 24 p1. Gibson continues “the inner panels of both represented from left to right, the Fall of Man, humanity in a state of sin, and the punishments meted out to sinners in the afterlife.” In 1950 Andrew Pigler wrote of *The Haywain* as a treatment of the Seven Deadly Sins quoting the *Prophecy of Amos* 2:13-14 in relation to the hayride to Hell: “Behold I wil scream under you [be unable to bear the load of your sins] as a wain squeaketh that is laden with hay. And flight shall perish from the swift, and the valiant shall not possess his strength, neither shall the strong save his life.” ‘Astrology and Jerome Bosch’ *The Burlington Magazine* 92 pp132-6
 - 8 Bax *Hieronymus Bosch his picture-writing deciphered* 1949 transl MA Bax-Botha 1979 p19 n66
 - 9 In a bizarre theory, Marina Warner in *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* suggests that de Sigüenza was the historian of a religious order to which one Fray Ramón Pané belonged. Pané was responsible for compiling a report in 1498 on the social structure, the songs, beliefs and myths of the Taino Indians on Hispaniola for Columbus – *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios*. Warner believes that Bosch may have had access to Pané via de Sigüenza or directly via his aristocratic clientele. Her view of *The Garden* is summarised, in the words of James Lasdun’s review in the *London Review of Books* 21 August 2003, as an “encryption of yearnings and anxieties awakened by the discovery of the New World, all held together in a seething, volatile suspension, and informed equally by Ovid’s fruitarian Golden Age, Christianity’s horror of female flesh and sexual procreation, and Pané’s evocation of prelapsarian Eden in the Taino stories of fruit-eating ghosts and asexual, fruit-like human propagation”.
 - 10 Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 p8 suggests that “the only thing that can be said with some degree of certainty is that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* does not represent Bosch’s own dreams, but those of humanity at large” which is no small claim for a ‘certainty’. He then puts forward the conflicting premises that the artist “did not intend to create the confusion with which Beatis and many later commentators and interpreters of the painting saw themselves confronted” whilst the imagery “is the result of a calculated strategy to make the image impenetrable” p19
 - 11 Unity of impulse was a phrase of Edgar Allen Poe referring to his philosophy of composition, and the way he bound an idea together in order to drive emotional response.
 - 12 This is attributed to Carl Linfert but I cannot find the source: “Think of mixing Fellini with David Lynch, sprinkling in a little James Joyce, and having it all put on canvas by Salvador Dali” – only Linfert would have avoided saying canvas. He knows it was painted on oak panels.
 - 13 Brian Sewell ‘Seeing Bosch in the Dark’ *Evening Standard* 5 October 2001
 - 14 Falkenburg pp161-171 likes to call them *entremets*, which translated means side dishes, and more commonly a sweet or dessert, and here used by an art historian as a catch-all phrase for “theatrical installations and performances offered for the entertainment of guests attending the elaborate ceremonial banquets at the Burgundian court. The term refers both to the objects placed on the table and (morisk) dances, acrobatic stunts, musical performances, *tableaux-vivants*-like presentations, and mechanized stage props, situated in front of, or hovering above, the tables”. Visual exegesis is another favourite of Falkenburg. It is “academic vogue... rarely defined, and when it is... contradictory” according to Peter Escalante in *The Calvinist International* 20 December 2012, who wrote 1200 words to explain, even accepting Falkenburg’s use of the term, why the concept “presents

a number of problems”, why it was an “inherently confused” use of the phrase even when a painting was “modeled loosely on certain kinds of late medieval devotional texts, and, like those, through a kind of system of directive commonplaces aimed at leading the viewer toward a given conclusion” and why the term “eisegesis” was more precise and correct, as an artist’s ‘interpretation’ was itself an equivocal term.

- 15 Book of Proverbs 8:30-31 (italics in the original)
- 16 For the whole question of medieval dream theory, the qualities of true and false dreams, taken with the distorting and deceptive qualities of mirrors, the ‘lover’s glass’, multiple narrative voices reflected in the double nature of some imagery that veils with ambiguity their true meaning, and how characteristic the *Roman de la Rose* is of medieval speculation literature see Goldin *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* 1967 pp52-68, D Kelly *Internal Difference and Meanings in the Roman de la Rose* 1995, Suzanne Conklin Akbari *Seeing Through the Veil. Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* 2004, P J Eberle ‘The Lovers’ Glass. Nature’s Discourse on Optics and the Optical Design of the Romance of the Rose’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* 46, 1977 pp241-262; K Brownlee ‘Reflections in the Miroër aus Amoreus. The Inscribed Reader in Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose’ *Mimesis. From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* J D Lyons and S G Nichols 1982 pp60-70, 257-8, also Herbert Grabes 1973 and 1982. For Augustine’s mirror of the soul, mirrors as compendiums of knowledge, and mirrors of idealized virtue, R Bradley ‘Backgrounds of the title Speculum in Medieval Literature’ 1954 *Speculum* 29 pp100-115. For the 14th century late medieval instruction ‘manuals’ preparatory to initiation into religious mysteries and the *Speculum humanae salvationis* see Bradley ‘The Speculum Image in Medieval Mystical Writers’ 1988 *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* Exeter Symposium III 1984 pp9-27.
- 17 For the need to expose our private lives and those of others – Josh Cohen *The Private Life: why we remain in the dark* 2013
- 18 Looking ahead at this point, we should not forget that the theatre of this world was, for John Calvin, the theatre of God’s glory. Calvin thought God enjoyed his creation and wanted people to be different. He often compared the world to a theatre, and the drama of our lives to a play performed in the presence of God. It was as though we improvise our way through life, experience freedom day by day, but all the time we are speaking to a script, in the voice of the character in which we have been cast – which at times led to endless theological debate about humanity’s free will or lives predestined by God and at times came to overshadow larger questions regarding final salvation or damnation.
- 19 The photographer Walker Evans described himself as an ‘apologetic voyeur’ the assumption being that the most authentic portrayal of a given subject was made when the subject was caught unaware.
- 20 Steven F Kruger *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* 1992 p130ff and see n16
- 21 Reindert Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 pp66-76 The Creator, Man and Woman
- 22 ibid pp143-154 L’Espace de l’Artifice
- 23 ibid pp201-205 “Ye Shall Know Them by Their Fruits”
- 24 ibid pp261-266 The Land of Unlikeness
- 25 ibid pp95-102 Mnemonic Imagery
- 26 ibid pp128-134 Somnium and insomnia
- 27 First Epistle of St John 4:16 “God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.”
- 28 Pablo Picasso quoted by Françoise Gilot *Life With Picasso* 1964 p257
- 29 The Italian Massimo Bontempelli also used the term ‘realismo magico’ in 1926 regarding his own writing. The Venezuelan Uslar Pietri was the first to apply the term to Latin American literature, and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias used it to describe his work when he won the Nobel prize for literature in 1967, “since when it has been used and abused by just everyone in Latin America” according to Marcial Souto. But it began as a term in relation to art.
- 30 E H Gombrich ‘The Earliest Description of Bosch’s Garden of Delight’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol30 1967 p405 “Perhaps recent interpretations have concentrated too much on the sexual element and too little on the other theme that appears to pervade this enigmatic panel, the theme of instability and impermanence... Everywhere this theme of hair-raising instability is emphasized.” Gombrich advises us to look at the picture and to “disregard the posthumous title”. The quotation is from De Tolnay p31.
- 31 Max J Friedländer *Early Netherlandish Painting* vol V p57 “no orgiastic or erotic effect issues from this propinquity”
- 32 In 1956 Bax concluded the garden represented lust and since then the visual metaphors for various organs and symbols have been related to songs, slang and sayings from the period. Another favourite of Philip II was the sensual, expressive brushwork of late Titian, certainly his ‘ambiguous women’ that could be read either as love poems in paint or simply fleshy nudes as sophisticated soft porn. Both Philip and Titian were interested in Ovid, whose recently translated *Metamorphoses* – a masterpiece that recounts tales of change and transformation as a metaphor for the chaotic, unpredictable nature of the world itself. It was the source of intellectual excitement, and inevitably, in tune with the times, how art could express the erotic and literary ideas of antiquity.
- 33 Fraenger 1969 p17
- 34 Reindert Falkenburg highlighted this in his paper *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil’s Book of Nature* delivered at the conference held at the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid to coincide with the Patinir exhibition in 2007. “I realized how easily we believe the concoctions of our own mind when facing the phantasms of Bosch and his imitators – and follow our own imagination rather than that of the artist... I will not hide that, once one enters the path of the imagination, it is not easy to follow when one is on a scholarly journey. For how, and where, is the viewer to draw the line between an imaginative projection orchestrated by the image and pure fantasy?”
- 35 Guillaume de Lorris (part 1 c1230) and Jean de Meun (part 2 c1270-80) *The Roman de la Rose* was the most famous. An allegory of the romance between the Lover and the Rose, it was a pilgrimage of love derived from the love poems of troubadours, and served as a compendium of advice, mixing the courtly with the erotic. Huizinga called it a “veritable treasure-house of amorous doctrine.” This garden includes both dangers and dangers, a fountain of love, the association of love with making love and water being well established by the time of Bosch who included scenes of both single sex and mixed bathing in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Huizinga makes reference to the story p109 “combining the passionate character of its sensuous central theme with all the elaborate fancy of the system of courtly love, satisfied the needs of erotic expression of a whole age” and points out that municipal bathhouses were close to brothels.
- 36 Lust was the first sin to be committed after Eve took the apple. St Augustine refers to this in *City of God* XIV ch17.
- 37 Huizinga on ‘The Romance of the Rose’ *The Waning of the Middle Ages* 1924 p110
- 38 Gibson 1973 p14 quoting Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer *Malleus Maleficarum* transl M Summers 1970 (1928) p59
- 39 In Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* 1891, the young Tess is fed an early strawberry by Alec d’Urberville, an incident that Hardy uses as a metaphor for her seduction.
- 40 According to de Siguënza, the subject of the painting was “*de la gloria vana y breve gusto de la fresa o madroño*” – “the vain glory and fleeting taste of the strawberry or madroño”. The picture has been called *la Lujuria* (lust) and *el Quadro del madroño* (Jacques Combe p34 translates this as ‘the picture of the arbutus’ a quaint way to refer to the trees and shrubs of the genus Arbutus that includes the strawberry.)
- 41 Specifically Artemidorus whose five volume *Interpretation of Dreams* that used the “juxtaposition of similarities” and centred on oneiromancy – a method of foretelling the future, including a lengthy essay on the divinatory significance of dreaming about sex in every conceivable way with one’s mother. De Tolnay refers to Bosch’s ‘striking picture of repressed desires’ symbolised by fruit pp31-3 and to Artemidorus in a note p362, where he also refers to 15th century dream books,

specifically *Les songes de Daniel Prophète* of 1482, “a basic work for that period, published in four languages”.

- 42 Marina Warner *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* 2003, p44 commenting on the lack of variety in available nourishment “a vegetarian party, even a fruitarians’ bacchanale, without wine or other liquor, an orgy that is oddly unfleshed and ethereal, involving neither roasted meats nor any kind of flesh at all.” Some of the groups of figures bear a passing resemblance to floats used during Carnival, a time without meat, may echo this point.
- 43 The third part of the sermon on the mount from the Gospel According to Saint Matthew 7:16 and 20. Fruits are also used as a symbol of humanity’s actions, see also St Luke 6:44-5 “For every tree is known by its fruit...”
- 44 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1937 and 1965 transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p361 – something Fraenger rejected *Das Tausendjährige Reich* 1947 and 1969 p20, translated as *The Millenium of Hieronymus Bosch* 1952, and *Le Royaume millénaire de Jérôme Bosch* 1966.
- 45 *ibid* p30
- 46 *ibid* p31
- 47 In this apocryphal work Baruch, a disciple of Jeremiah, gives an account of the revelation he received in heaven, based on the idea that God allowed Moses together with “other pious men to behold before their death the whole world and all the mysteries of nature”. It probably dates from the second century AD, and may have been written originally in Aramaic, Hebrew or Greek, however, the general assumption is Syriac. If Bosch referred to this book then we must assume it was the revised Greek version now known as *3 Baruch*. Incomplete, the seven heavens of the Syriac edition have been reduced to five, the conclusion is missing, and most importantly, Christian elements are included, such as the insertion at 4:9-15 on the importance of wine as a part of the Eucharist.
- 48 De Tolnay p361 quotes from *3 Baruch* ch10 “I saw a great level plain and in its middle a lake full of water and on it were many birds of all kinds, but different from those that we have here... and all these birds were larger than those we know on earth... the plain that surrounds the lake with all its wonders is the place where the souls of the just are and live together in choirs”. Nevertheless, even De Tolnay comments, “the meaning of the whole is different, since in Bosch there is present the additional significance of corruption”.
- 49 Epistle of St Paul to Titus 1:15. Three other passages from this pastoral letter of Paul may be relevant: 1:1-3 contains the theology of salvation, 2:11-15 notes that the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all mankind, and that in the words of *The Daily Missal* “Our Lord will manifest himself to all the elect, when, at the end of the world, shall take place the glorious apparition of the great God”, and 3:4-7 on renewal in the Holy Spirit and that through the grace of Jesus Christ we should become heirs in hope of eternal life. The reference to 1:15 has been pointed out by Reuterswärd.
- 50 The Letter’s reference to “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies” is one reason there are no churches dedicated to Paul on Crete. However, where the real threat to order comes from is unclear. It may well have been the Gnostics, a particular threat in the 2nd century.
- 51 A point rejected by H Th Colenbrander *Hieronymus Bosch and Diego Guevara: The ‘third’ Haywain* 2012 – “a religious intention and destination of *The Garden* and the *Haywain* is very doubtful.” Were they moralistic rather than religious?
- 52 “a *speculum nuptiarum* for private use” something unheard of until Vandenbroeck came up with the theory in 1986.
- 53 See Suzanne Laemers ‘Hieronymus Bosch and the Tradition of the Early Netherlandish Triptych’ for an assessment of how the work of Bosch accords with that of his contemporaries, the arrangement and choice of themes, particularly viewed against a comprehensive inventory of 156 triptychs from 1400-1520 *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001 pp77-85.
- 54 As with most triptychs it has been read from both left to right and right to left. And we are reading; Jeffrey Hamburger and Reindert Falkenburg have both written about ‘reading’ rather than ‘seeing’ the Book of Nature, as in the medieval idea of Creation as a book to be read as one begins the mental ascent to God through meditation.
- 55 Daniel 1947 spelt out how the painting was derived from the *Roman de la Rose*, the 13th century allegorical tale published in Paris in 1493. Marijnissen pp95-6 also points to other pieces of allegorical literature that appeared around the same time including in 1482 in Gouda, “A Dutch adaptation of Pierre Michault’s *La danse des aveugles*” – Vanden drie blinde dansen or three fatal dances.
- 56 Combe 1946, Linfert 1959 p20 – “it is best described as a picture of the world in alchemical flux”, Van Lennep 1966, Chailley 1978, Dixon 1981
- 57 Anna Spychalska-Boczkowska detected astral symbolism and zodiacal configurations that she interpreted as indicating the whole event could be dated precisely to 6 June 1504 under the constellation of Cancer.
- 58 *Where’s Wally* is a series of large format children’s books by Martin Handford begun in 1987. Called *Où est Charlie* in France, and *Where’s Waldo* in the US, the game was always the same; find Wally hidden inside pictures of very, very large numbers of people. “Have you found me yet?”
- 59 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p360
- 60 There are differing views and some confusion over the approaches. If it is true that the views of Denis predominated during the lifetime of Bosch, then his variations on, and extension of, Augustine appears to be what is illustrated here. The text that appears across the top of the closed shutters from both Psalm 32:9 “For he spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created” and Psalm 148:5 “Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created” (not Psalm 33 referred to by both Jacobs ‘The Triptych Unhinged’ *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001, and Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* p75) – generally considered in critical interpretations of the Bible as part of the verse “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”.
- 61 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1937 and 1965 transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p33
- 62 Lynn F Jacobs notes Keith Moxey ‘Semiotics and the Social History of Art’ *New Literary History* 22 1991 pp996-97 on the extent to which the artist challenged the accepted form of the triptych: “Bosch inverted cultural hierarchies to create imagery of the world turned upside down” and makes the observation that in so doing he “effectively turned the world of the triptych upside down” ‘The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch’ *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 31/4 Winter 2000 p1041. The extent of this turning upside down is disputed. Suzanne Laemers argues that despite the exceptional overall concepts of Bosch, and the unusually large amount of space devoted to Hell, his work does not deviate largely from the traditions, indeed it “is anchored in them”, except in two instances that she sees as unique: *The Haywain* and *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. ‘Hieronymus Bosch and the Tradition of the Early Netherlandish Triptych’ *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds) 2001 pp76-85. Working against or ‘anchored in’ the tradition, there is no doubt Bosch exploited the potential to the full. Despite other disagreements and ideas, the link between the inside and outside of triptychs continues to be endorsed; for example Colenbrander (2012), Benge (2012) et al.
- 63 Could this be because the side shutters once enclosed a different central panel?
- 64 Max J Friedländer *Early Netherlandish Painting* vol V p57 and 61
- 65 Peter Glum ‘Divine Judgement in Bosch’s Garden of Earthly Delights’ *Art Bulletin* vol LVIII/1 March 1976 pp45-54 “a disguised Last Judgment... a divine judgement, but not a last judgment at the end of time, nor an apocalyptic vision” but one where “God’s judgment is

- imminent". Glum considers this possibility supported by comparing it with two *Last Judgements* in Krakow and Madrid that are made up solely from rearranged elements from within *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Referring to Revelations 16:15 and Genesis 3:7 Glum interprets the nakedness as eschatological. He also goes to great lengths to counter the absence of elements usually found in Last Judgements but missing here, eg St Michael weighing souls, Paradise as the city of God, etc.
- 66 Marijnissen says the man is "clothed", Silver "unclad".
- 67 A significant variation is that *The Garden* does not show the Fall of the Rebel Angels, the Fall of Humanity and the Expulsion from Paradise, clearly successive and linked events in the mind of Bosch.
- 68 That Bosch derived motifs from Franco-Flemish book illustration has been suggested by many writers in the last decade. Thomas Kren (*Illuminating the Renaissance. The Triumph of Flemish manuscript painting in Europe* Kren & Scot McKendrick (eds) 2003 pp44- 47) and Larry Silver (*Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 pp91-92) have pointed out the connections with Simon Marmion and the Master of Mary of Burgundy. Kren suggested Bosch had access to the Burgundian court library, and compared Adam and Eve in Bosch's Paradise with a Marmion miniature in *Les Sept Âges du monde*. Silver refers to *The Visions of the Knight of Tondal* in the Getty for a comparison of dark areas animated by semi-lit devils. Referring to *The Garden of Earthly Delights* Erwin Pokorny pointed out the idea of angry animals in the Garden of Eden as not being a Bosch invention by comparing them to engravings by the Flemish Master of the Boccaccio illustrations. He notes the miniatures that featured landscapes with high horizons, eg *Grandes Chroniques de France* dedicated to Philip the Good, and now in the Hermitage, and makes reference to *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* that show wild women standing between giant strawberries, and apes acting similarly to Bosch's nudes: "Drolleries with sexual content like that of the crazy apes in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy make clear that even the rudest jokes were common motifs in the borders of illuminated books". Other references are made to The Master of the Dresden Prayer Book's nudes painted in the mid 1470s in the Salting Hours, and the Hours of Englebrecht now in Oxford that include a wild man riding a flying griffin. 'Bosch and the influence of Flemish book illumination' paper 2007, pub *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp265-277. Pokorny also states that the "old fashioned style of Bosch's triptych argues for a much earlier dating" c1485-95 than generally regarded as likely, particularly with reference to Xavier Duquenne's dating of 1490-98 for *The Adoration of the Magi* and its chronological relationship to *The Garden*. For Marmion see Sandra Hindman 'The Case of Simon Marmion: Attributions & Documents' *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 40 Bd H3/4 1977 pp185-204
- 69 Silver *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p26
- 70 Reindert Falkenburg unpublished *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil's Book of Nature* delivered at the Prado conference 2007 "Bosch's art does not place itself outside the pictorial language and hermeneutics of late-medieval religious imagery, but is firmly rooted in it – only capitalizes on it in unusual ways."
- 71 Philip Larkin *An Arundel Tomb* 1964 on reality and imperfection of human existence, from *The Whitsun Weddings*.
- 72 A lovers' duet describing the transcendent feelings that love brings to their surroundings from the 1953 show *Kismet* (originally a 1911 play by Knoblock) that used melodies based on music by chemist/composer Alexander Borodin for *Prince Igor* in 1887.
- 73 Reindert Falkenburg in conversation with the author 2006. See also Falkenburg *Black Holes in Bosch: Visual Typology in The Garden of Earthly Delights* taken from *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and early Modern Europe* 2007 Falkenburg, Melion and Richardson (eds) pp105-131. See also Falkenburg's unpublished papers *Landscape in Bosch: the Devil's Book of Nature* delivered on his behalf by Todd M Richardson 23 May 2007 at the 'The Sources of Bosch' conference held at the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center in 's-Hertogenbosch, and *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil's Book of Nature* delivered at the conference held at the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid marking the opening of the exhibition devoted to Patinir, 3 July-7 October 2007. Anna Spychalska-Boczkowska refers to the two Adams in her 1977 article in *Oud Holland* 91 p205 "His relationship with Christ is, however, emphasized by the union of his feet with Christ's. This original composition of the scene in which Christ marries Eve expresses the basic Christian dogma of the marriage of Christ as the second Adam with Eve as Ecclesia" ie the Church. She later notes, p215, "Had Eve not sinned – her sin is called *felix culpa*, the happy sin – there would have been no Christ as Bridegroom and she would not have become the second Eve-Ecclesia, the Bride of Christ." With reference to the work of Schmidt, Erich and Chavasse, Boczkowska notes manuscript editions of the *Song of Songs* reflecting this relationship, and that Bosch "refers to the same typological symbolism when depicting the marriage" as works by Jan van Eyck and the Master of the Flémalle. Gregory Martin *Hieronymus Bosch* 1978 picks up on Boczkowska's views on both the marriage of Christ/Adam, and the riddle of the picture unravelled by astrology and alchemy. See also Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 pp66-76, pp205-211; Fernando Marias 'Bosch and Dracontius' *De Creatione Mundi Hexameron* 2010 pp246-263 in *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources*. Second International Bosch Conference 2007 De Bruyn and Koldeweij (eds); also Jacobs 'The Triptych Unhinged' 2001 pp64-75 *Hieronymus Bosch. New Insights into his life and work* Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbera van Kooij (eds).
- 74 The relationship between Adam and Christ was defined by Paul: First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15:22 "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" and 15:45 "The first Adam was made into a living soul; the last Adam into a quickening spirit". Paul makes the comparison between Christ and Adam tracing the history of salvation from Adam's sin and its impact on humanity to the grace poured out on humanity from Jesus, a gift that far surpasses Adam's sin: "where sin abounded, grace did more abound" – see the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 5:20. The whole question of original sin may seem unsustainable to people today, thus rupturing the foundation of the doctrine of redemption and a Redeemer. Romans 7:18-19 expresses the contradiction at the heart of this, the will to do good, and impulse to do the contrary that is the reality of this competition. This element of the painting may be compared with *The Haywain's* more conventional Creation scene with God the Father as the Creator. Christ as the Man of Sorrows appears in the clouds above and outside the earthly realm of the central panel, and only to a praying angel and to the viewer. It is worth noting Falkenburg sees the left inner wing of *The Haywain* as confirmation of the artist's familiarity with Augustine's ideas and *De civitate dei* in particular, with the Rebel Angels transformation to insects, monsters and birds and their impact on Paradise itself suggesting a direct relationship between the Fall of the Rebel Angels and the corruption of the earth; *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 pp102-116 (The Root of Evil). Marijnissen *Bosch* 2007 p65 juxtaposes a 1484 quote from Jacobus de Thermo with the detail of God in Heaven surveying the Rebel Angels: "*Ik heb den mensche daer toe gescapen inden state der onnoselheyt op dat si soude mogen weder vollen den valle der engelen*" – I created man innocent so that he might replace the fallen angels. Infrared inspection of the panel revealed underdrawing of a much greater cascade of angels not painted on the surface; Carmen Garrido and Roger Van Schoute *Bosch at the Museo del Prado* 2001 pp125-7, figure 8.
- 75 Irenaeus of Lyon, a man who defined mainstream Christianity towards the end of the 2nd century and in the course of which labelled alternative versions generally found at the cultural frontiers of faith *gnōstike haireisis* (a phrase Henry More turned into gnosticism in the 17th century) determined to stress the importance of flesh and matter.
- 76 The second Adam tag continually reappears, eg Diodore, Bishop of Tarsus, and his student, later the Bishop of Mopsuestia, Theodore, both forceful theologians in the 4th and 5th centuries stressed how vital it was to remember that Christ in his human nature was the second Adam; as did Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople in the 5th century, etc., etc. Their posthumous legacy was considered both orthodox and heretical at various times as the Church defined and redefined doctrine.
- 77 The Apocalypse of St John 20:2
- 78 Genesis 1:27
- 79 ibid Melion p32
- 80 Isaiah 54:5 "For he that made thee shall rule over thee, the Lord

of hosts is his name", sometimes rendered as "Your maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is his name"

- 81 Mark 2:18-20 "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast; but thy disciples do not fast? And Jesus saith to them: Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then they shall fast in those days."
- 82 John 3:28-30 "You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."
- 83 2 Corinthians 11:2 "I have espoused you to one husband" and 2 Corinthians 13:9 and 11 prays for our perfection.
- 84 2 Corinthians 11:2 "For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."
- 85 The Apocalypse of St John 19:6-9, 21:2, 9-11 following which the Church, as bride of Christ, and a company of perfected believers, producing spiritual fruit on earth, will face Satan cast down after the great war in the heavens.
- 86 Gospel According to St John 3:7
- 87 Galatians 3:26-8. (In some versions 3:26 – men and women are both referred to as sons.)
- 88 Genesis 1:27 and 28
- 89 A comparison might be made with Bruegel's 'children' who appear 'adult'. See chapter 6.
- 90 Book of Proverbs 8:30-31 (italics in the original)
- 91 In the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:11 Christians are admonished "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child" and reminded that spiritual love is something we grow into, and need to pursue and work at in order to perfect. While we are in the flesh we are to pursue love, Paul tells us in the next chapter. The child-adults of Bosch have forgotten to look for the love of God as they indulge in physical lovemaking. Human understanding is child-like in comparison with God; spiritual maturity will only come when we progress from the carnal. 13:12 refers to our limited knowledge of God in this life, by comparing it to the complete knowledge to be expected in the afterlife – "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face." Paul to the Romans 8:6-7 takes up the theme of the carnal mind and death: "For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be" and 8:13 "For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." The physical death of unbelievers leads to total annihilation of body, soul, and spirit, alienation from Christ, something far worse than simply extinction of being. Turn to the right wing of the painting. [The carnal mind is 'enmity against God' in the King James version, Romans 8:7, and addressed by Charles Spurgeon (1834-92) 'the Prince of Preachers' who, without formal education, drew thousands to hear his weekly sermons in the Surrey Music Hall. He thundered: "the noun, not an adjective... not black but blackness... enmity itself... wickedness itself."]
- 92 "Evil was like Peter Pan – it carried with it the horrifying and horrible gift of eternal youth" Graham Greene *The Third Man* p85
- 93 St Augustine *City of God* Book XII Chapter 23
- 94 St Augustine *City of God* Book XIV Chapter 14
- 95 Larry Silver *Jheronimus Bosch and the Issue of Origins* paper delivered 2007 at the Bosch conference, pub 'Jheronimus Bosch and the Question of Origins' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp34-56
- 96 If anything, it reminds us of the art of Spencer Tunick. The shock of the nude attracts comment even today. Tunick has been posing and photographing massed ranks of naked people in a bizarre cocktail of nudity for over a decade, from a vineyard in Burgundy to the Stadsschouwburg in Bruges, from the Sydney Opera House in Australia to the Aletsch Glacier in Switzerland – wacky antiseptic nudes that certainly do not celebrate sex at all, but reveal unveiled bodies in a celebration of community, the vulnerability of the crowd, something akin to Bosch – images of Everyman. Many people hate art, Tunick's sensationalism convinces them they are right.
- 97 Siegfried Wenzel 'The Three Enemies of Man' *Medieval Studies* 29, 1967 pp47-66
- 98 For example, Parmigianino's *Annunciation* – "the usual splay of the Virgin's legs placing sexuality in the service of incarnation" etc., etc., see James Grantham Turner 'An Erotic Annunciation by Parmigianino or Bedoli' *Notes in the History of Art* 29/2 2010 pp21-26; *The Magdalen Reading* with "her mix of purity and eroticism" (Charles Darwent *The Independent* 27 September 2009) was the poster girl for Leuven Museum's reopening show *Rogier van der Weyden: Master of Passions*. See also Diane Wolfthal for a view on how bodies were understood and sex depicted *In and Out of the Marital Bed. Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* 2010, a book described as both "penetrating... fascinating and coherent" by Marina Wallace (bbchistorymagazine.com) and "a (defrocked) curate's egg... lively scholarly... interspersed with wild tabloid-style speculation" by James Hall *The Art Newspaper* 217 October 2010.
- 99 I have already argued in chapter 1 how, through the process of observation, the observer alters the outcome.
- 100 Generalised to the point of losing much of its original meaning the concept of uncertainty is one of those scientific notions that has become common coinage. The German theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) who, working with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen in 1927, developed the *Ungenauigkeitsrelationen* (inexact or inaccuracy relations) usually mistranslated as the 'uncertainty principle' of quantum theory: "the more precisely the position is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in this instant, and vice versa" is the standard statement of the 'uncertainty relation' taken from his original paper. Heisenberg – relations "are usually called relations of uncertainty or principle of indeterminacy" see *Gifford Lectures* 1955-56 Edinburgh 1958 p43. It has been said that Heisenberg and Bohr had been so close they could finish each other's sentences. The German invasion of Denmark and the threat of atomic warfare destroyed their understanding of each other. Views on Heisenberg's activities during the Third Reich and particularly the Second World War vary wildly, and led to many retrospective evaluations, to the extent that the man himself became subject to a type of uncertainty principle. Did he simply fail or did he deliberately sabotage the Nazi atomic bomb programme? Even the greatest can make mistakes, maybe he should be celebrated as a hero? Did he subscribe to the suppression of 'Jewish physics' (relativity) or did the Gestapo see him as a danger? His reticence regarding some of his wartime work 'introduces an element of irreducible uncertainty'. See Thomas Powers *Heisenberg's War* 1993.
- 101 An example of desperation is Lynda Harris *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch* 1985 that sees the doctrines of Catharism, Gnostic and dualistic heresy affirming that the earth was literally Hell, and Bosch a secret adherent to such beliefs as the inspiration behind his paintings. "The spirituality of Bosch, as well as his dualism and his Cathar message, are visible in every painting he produced" p244. With continued reference to the Cathar *Secret Book* Harris sees *The Garden* as Satan's "illusory paradise" in which "souls have found a place where they can abandon themselves totally to pleasure" pp110-11. The Satanic plant that Eden's "iniquitous fruits grow on is a vine", "a form of the Manichean tree of darkness", etc., etc., p122. Fantastic rubbish. Like Wilhelm Fraenger and his theories of Bosch belonging to a secret, heretical, promiscuous sect (the Brotherhood of the Free Spirit) the artist's recorded membership of the Confraternity of Our Lady is simply passed over. He enrolled sometime between 17 June 1486 and 22 June 1487. (There were around 15,000 members in 1500 and 100 "sworn brothers", made up of clergy and the urban élite known as Swan brothers.) "Bosch probably became a sworn brother on New

- Years Day 1488.” See Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet *Hieronymus Bosch: the complete paintings and drawings* 2001 p56, and Lucas Van Dijk ‘Jheronimus Bosch inspired by People in his Environment: Research from the archival Sources’ *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp112-122.
- 102 From 1490, the thoughts of Augustine had become widely available through the first printed editions of all his known works made by Johann Amerbach in Basle. “The Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the Church.” B B Warfield *Calvin and Augustine* 1956 p332. For Augustine’s thoughts *On Patience*, see *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 1887 vol 3 ed Philip Schaff transl H Browne
- 103 The Donatist schism and the Pelagian crisis. The followers of Donatus had effectively turned their backs on the church of the masses, whilst the ascetic Pelagius saw grace as something very different to Augustine, the grace of God as opposed to inner grace, a ‘spiritual fuel’ that by the Middle Ages had become something called ‘created grace’. Pelagius’s central concept is contained in the formula “Si necessitatis est, peccatum non est; si voluntatis, vitari potest” – if there be need, there is no sin; but if the will is there, then sinning is possible. By minimising God’s grace and attributing sin to individual failings rather than to human nature, his ideas were seen as a denial of Original Sin. But without Pelagius we may not have the definitive statements of St Augustine who was effectively provoked by this Celtic theologian into defining Divine Grace, The Fall of Man, Original Sin, Free Will and Predestination (which left little for anyone else to do until Aquinas, 800 years later). A movement to reconcile their conflicting ideas failed, and Pelagius was banished in 418AD after Augustine attacked him in *De peccatore merit* – on the merits of sinners.
- 104 Gospels According to Saints Matthew 22:1-14 and Luke 14:16-24
- 105 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 5:12 – arguably a mistranslation: by saying “in whom” rather than “after whose example” the Church of Rome became the beneficiary of the doctrine of original sin, Augustine’s pessimistic view of human nature and the part played by sex in transmitting the Fall.
- 106 Even today, the theology of sexuality is still something the Church wrestles with. In matters of sexual morality the faithful increasingly do what seems right for them in the spirit of the gospel. This is written as the question is openly posed, can the Catholic Church save itself? Much of the Church has not changed since the 11th century; neither the Reformation nor the Enlightenment succeeded in forcing real reform on the system. To what extent a community is pastorally alive, liturgically active, ecumenically sensitive, and socially committed, depends on individual priests and their laity. The new era ushered in by Roncalli, ‘a transitional pope’ as he was regarded at the time of his election, marked an irrevocable turning point. But, as Hans Küng has suggested, if the Church is to have a future, it may need a John XXIV and a Vatican III to lead it from Roman Catholicism to Catholicity, a pope who is, in the words of Gregory the Great ‘a servant of the servants of God’ – genuine renewal or more restoration, an issue the Church faces yet again. As Pope Francis evoked an image of the Church that drastically contradicted Benedict XVI’s favoured metaphor of a ‘smaller, obedient Church... a just remnant’ describing it instead as a ‘big tent of sinners’ and a ‘field hospital after battle’ – a Church that was meant to heal, the possibility appeared once again of a collegial, pluralist, ecumenical, inclusive, engaged organisation of a pilgrim people on the move. Interview Fr Antonio Spadaro 9/2013. As before, it will struggle against those who believe in a triumphalist Church, one that deplores the loss of ancient liturgy, prizes top down authority over individual conscience and sees any criticism as defamation.
- 107 Augustine *The Confessions* Book VIII.12 *The Birthpangs of Conversion* transl Henry Chadwick 2008
- 108 *ibid* Book VIII.6 – “One day... Alypius and I received a surprise visit at home from a man named Ponticianus, a compatriot in that he was an African, holding high office at the court... a conversation began in which he told the story of Antony”
- 109 Hippo Regius, the second city of Numidia after Carthage, later called Bône, and today Annaba in Algeria.
- 110 This oft-quoted sentence comes from Norman H Baynes *Cambridge Ancient History* 1939 p699
- 111 JFC Fuller *The Decisive Battles of the Western World* 1970 p185
- 112 Augustine *Retractions* “Rome, meanwhile, by the invasion of the Goths, under their King Alaric, was overthrown with the crash of a mighty slaughterer... wherefore, I, inflamed with zeal for the Lord’s house, determined to write a treatise on The City of God.” Like Jerome, with news of the collapse of Rome Augustine felt he had lost his bearings. Once Rome had gone, what sense was to be made of the world?
- 113 James Snyder ‘Introduction’ *Bosch in Perspective* ed Snyder 1973 p4. Falkenburg disagrees: see *Joachim Patinir and Hieronymus Bosch: The Devil’s Book of Nature* Museo Nacional del Prado, October 2007 “Paintings of these visionary saints do not bespeak of a ‘pessimistic world view,’ or of a *contemptus mundi*, but, on the contrary, rely on, and direct, the viewer’s competence in ‘mastering’ the world through ‘speculative vision.’ ”
- 114 Augustine died in Hippo, 28 August 430, when, after a three month siege, the barbarian armies broke through the defensive cordon, and the Empire’s hold on North Africa finally collapsed, 20 years to the day after the fall of Rome.
- 115 Pope Benedict XVI speaking at Castel Gandolfo, 31 August 2011.
- 116 Jacques Combe is an example of many who stress the “unimpeachable orthodoxy” of Bosch’s beliefs despite an “insatiable curiosity” that stamps his mind as “most modern” while illustrating “the mystic teachings of the previous century” *Jheronimus Bosch* transl Ethel Duncan 1946 p17, 23
- 117 Writing this at a time when the rise of fundamentalist religion, Christian, Moslem and Jewish, has become one of the most dangerous aspects of life, to the extent that it is one of the greatest dangers we face, should make it a little easier to understand Bosch. It doesn’t. Nor does it make the sexual content any easier to equate; today’s equivalent might be the baroque sex practices of fetishist film stars spread across magazine covers.
- 118 Rainer Maria Rilke, from the first stanza of the *Duino Elegies* 1912-1922: “Denn das Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen, / und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäht, / uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.” (The translation used here, by Stephen Mitchell, 1992, is closer to the original than many of the more famous interpretations by Stephen Spender and others.) The very first line also sounds like an echo of Bosch’s fears: “Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?” – Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels’ hierarchies?
- 119 Looking to St Augustine as a key figure to Bosch has been on the increase. Fernando Marias pointed out in his paper to the Second Bosch Conference in 2007 that *De creation mundi Hexameron* c496 attributed to Blossius-Aemilius Dracontius was rediscovered by Nicolaus Cusanus in the 15th century when it was often considered to be by Augustine, and the subject of a work by Bosch that until 1615 was in St John’s Church in ‘s-Hertogenbosch. He suggested this may have been another version of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. At the same time Silver addressed the issue of origins, pointing to 15th century illustrated manuscript editions of Augustine as a source, and the text of the *City of God* (specifically Books XI and XIV) for the artist’s understanding and treatment of the Fall of the Rebel Angels, and the Fall of Humanity, as the beginning of human history and its predetermined end with the Last Judgement. This followed on from his book in 2006 where with reference to Falkenburg he notes the influence of Augustine in the *Garden* p40, and his influence elsewhere. But it is Falkenburg who has repeatedly turned to Augustine with his assertion that the triptych expresses Augustinian notions, most recently *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011: from God’s Creation defined by *sepecies*, *ordo*, and *modus*; the psalms on the exterior of the *Garden* key to the saint’s discussion of the origins of evil, see pp102-116; the ‘wonders of nature’ pp116-119, that the “later Middle Ages indulged in herbaria, bestiaries and other encyclopedic collections of descriptions and characterizations of organic and inorganic nature” with reference to

- 13th century literature that he interprets as *mirabilia* that “according to Augustine’s reading of *mirabilia* in *De civitate dei*, point to the unlimited omnipotence and creative power of God” leading him to suggest the *Garden* is a pictorial encyclopedia, “or at least echoes similar ‘holistic’ and multi-leveled ambitions of human knowledge (and its limitations)” n173; the right hand panel of the *Garden* he reads as a *regio dissimilitudinis* – Augustine’s phrase for a ‘region of dissemblance’ pp 234-242, that he relates to Augustine’s views on man’s alienation from God, ‘Hell as anywhere and everywhere’ when “memory, reason and will are impugned and turned into oblivion, ignorance and blindness, and heartlessness” with the soul transformed from ‘divine likeness to bestial resemblance’ and the submission of human souls to becoming “objects rather than subjects of entertainment – ‘toys’ or ‘game,’ rather than ‘players’” in an entertainment of devilish play that unmasks the hallucinations of the Garden of Eden; all of which brings him round to the judgemental eye of Bosch, Christ staring out at the viewer challenging us to judge nature and the meaning of the picture, open our eyes to what is true or false, and to experience what it is to, quoting Augustine, “perceive myself to be far off from you [ie God] in the land of unlikeness, as if I heard your voice from on high.” p279
- 120 Max J Friedländer *Early Netherlandish Painting* Foreword to vol V p5
- 121 E H Gombrich ‘The Earliest Description of Bosch’s Garden of Delight’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol30 1967 pp403-406 “One may well believe the writer when he tells us that he found it impossible to describe these bizarre and fantastic inventions clearly to people who had not seen these panels.”
- 122 Marijnissen refers to it as the “tyrant” of Bosch research *Hieronymus Bosch The Complete Works* 2007 suppl. pix
- 123 Albrecht Dürer refers to the bed in his journal. De Beatis described it as “hung alongside erotic nudes in a festive room enclosed by trompe l’oeil exit doors that could trap visitors inside, and he marvels at a giant bed nearby into which the ruling count, famously fond of cruel sports, liked to toss his guests after making them blind drunk” according to Joseph Koerner speaking at the AAH Conference, 15 April 2010 in Glasgow Cathedral. Koerner continued: “Antonio de Beatis was one of a group of dignitaries on a mission to the Low Countries. That he was paraded in front of this triptych suggests that one of its purposes was to amaze and perhaps to trick and confuse visitors on the occasion of their audience with the count.”
- 124 In 1567 it adorned the chimneybreast of the Great Hall.
- 125 Ernst H Gombrich ‘The Earliest Description of Bosch’s Garden of Delight’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30, 1967 p405 “Antonio de Beatis looked at some of the bizarre details, but does not seem to have searched for a meaning in the whole. The tone of his description suggests entertainment rather than horror or anxiety.”
- 126 “he often held banquets and enjoyed seeing the guests drunk. If they had drunk so much wine that they could no longer stand, he would have them thrown onto the said bed” wrote Beatis of Hendrik II
- 127 Frédéric Elsig ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Workshop and the Issue of Chronology’ *Hieronymus Bosch* 2001 p99
- 128 The quotation is from Paul Vandenbroeck *Jheronimus Bosch. De verlossing van de Wereld* 2003 p84
- 129 Hans Belting 2007 p7 “The *scandalon* in this picture lies in its eroticism, which is nevertheless couched in biblical terms”.
- 130 For an example, see the note on Francis Bacon after this section.
- 131 *The Artist Grows Old* Kenneth Clark 1970, originally delivered as a Rede Lecture, published in 1972
- 132 If we accept that *The Haywain* is a late painting, then it would contradict this generalisation. Several commentators believe neither version to be originals by Bosch. Both versions could well be copies of an earlier painting by Bosch, a theory that would support the suggestion. Alternatively, the possibility of a Haywain Master has been proposed (see chapter 8). The Escorial version is considered to have been produced c1498/1504 and the *Prado Haywain* 1510/16.
- 133 Elena Calas ‘Bosch’s Garden of Delights: A Theological Rebus’ *Art Journal* vol XXIX/2 winter 1969/1970 p188
- 134 Augustine admitted that he at first thought Paul “contradicted himself” but over time came to see his “problems [with the prophet] simply vanished”. See *Saint Augustine: Confessions* 2008 p130.
- 135 Augustine saw the whole world symbolised in Adam: “For Adam himself (this I have said before) signifieth in Greek the whole world; for there are four letters, A, D, A, M. But as the Greeks speak the four quarters of the world have three initial letters, Anatoli, they call the East; Dysis, the West, Arktos, the North, Messembria, the South: thou has the word Adam. Adam therefore hath been scattered over the whole world.” *Exposition of the Book of Psalms* psalm 96/15. (See also the impact of maps, chapter 8)
- 136 Wisdom 1:14 “he made the nations of the world curable” – man is not only healable, but is healed de facto.
- 137 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 5:20
- 138 After a preview at the Mickery in Amsterdam, a crucible of the avant-garde, in March 1977 Ken Campbell’s *Illuminatus* was the opening production at the Cottesloe, the National Theatre’s studio space. Ken, who I had met while at college, summed up the philosophy behind the production: ‘that something was only really worth doing if it was impossible’ – rather like *The Garden*.
- 139 John Richardson ‘Bacon Agonistes’ *New York Review of Books* vol56/20, 17 December 2009
- 140 Roberta Smith ‘If Paintings Had Voices, Francis Bacon’s Would Shriek’ *New York Times* 22 May 2009
- 141 Robert Hughes *Nothing If Not Critical* p316 quotes Alan Bowness, then Director of the Tate Gallery, and Grey Gowrie, then Minister for the Arts in the UK, both making the claim. He goes on “Some art is wallpaper. Bacon’s is flypaper, and innumerable claims stick to it”.
- 142 Not just Francis Bacon. The problems of rapid reappraisal were again highlighted when a major exhibition of Henry Moore took place in 2010. Asked by Stephen Smith of the BBC about the artist’s reputation in the quarter century after his death, Ben Lewis of Prospect Magazine said, “By the 1950s Henry Moore had become a product range, a factory, an assembly line, a brand – part of Britain’s identity. You could say that before the war he was Henry Moore who made sculptures, but by the 1950s he was a sculptor who made Henry Moores.” Having spoken in the early 1990s to Moore’s assistant at the artist’s former home, Hoglands at Perry Green in Hertfordshire, I agree. The exhibition showed how the explicit sexuality of carvings produced in the 1930s that had a real erotic charge, degenerated into the quasi ‘light industry’ of his mature years – something to make one wonder if less really is Moore. *Francis Bacon/Henry Moore. Flesh and Bone* was a strange exhibition held at the Ashmolean in 2013, bringing together the two artists for the first time in 50 years. The genesis of the show was a lecture by Francis Warner at St Peter’s College in 1970 that so impressed one student, Richard Calvocoressi, now director of the Moore Foundation, that he kept the idea alive. However, what was uncontroversial in 1970 appeared an unfair battle in 2013, mediocre bland sculptures destined for civic space pitted against a tortured metamorphosing agonised vital world of dissolving colour. Opposites may well attract but these two were not complementary, there was no alliance other than in their dates, their quarrying of Christian imagery for their art (though neither was religious), fascination with the human figure and its construction (bones for Moore, mortal flesh for Bacon), their late obsession with commercialism, and in their decline.
- 143 He could not draw well, and there are very few drawings left as he sensibly destroyed most of them. Without formal training his compositional skills are also frequently lacking, there is little coherent structure. It’s easy to criticise.
- 144 Once Bacon had left the dedicated Erica Brausen in 1958 after ten years, and signed with Marlborough, it was said that Frank Lloyd arranged for the canvases to be collected before they dried in order to prevent the artist’s doubts and revisions reeking havoc on his investment to the point of destruction. The new dealer then managed

- to ramp up the prices over the years to Old Master levels. Bacon became the world's most expensive living artist when Sotheby's New York sold a triptych for \$6.3 million in 1989. In May 2008 Roman Abramovich paid \$77 million for a Bacon triptych, then the highest priced contemporary painting. (The following month a Monet 'water lilies' went for just \$70 million, a record for any Impressionist picture.) In 1946 Erica Brausen paid Bacon £200 for *Painting 1946* and sold it to MoMA for £280 two years later. In 2013 a Bacon sold for \$142.4m.
- 145 The formulaic paintings Bacon produced when he was cranking them out for that lucrative Marlborough contract, the ones with the tasteful colours; candy floss pink and sherbet lemon yellow, pistachio green – the tastefulness of it all neutered the nightmares.
 - 146 Bacon was criticised among other things for producing a continuous stream of very similar imagery, very similar was the criticism, not the same. When I interviewed the architect Maxwell Fry prior to producing a book about his work, at some point we talked about his partnership with Gropius. He told me a story Gropius liked to tell about a Bauhaus colleague in Weimar and Dessau, László Maholy-Nagy. Gropius said that most people only had one truly, original creative idea – everything else was just variations on a theme; what was unique about Maholy – he had two!
 - 147 Hughes called it provincial, marginal, literary and cute, anecdotal, little-island art.
 - 148 John Russell, not to my mind someone who usually gets these things right, nevertheless wrote in 'Art View: Time Vindicates Francis Bacon's Searing Vision' *New York Times* 9 June 1985, pA31 "In April 1945 the war in Europe was about to end. No one knew what peace would be like, but there was a general reluctance in England to believe that there was in human nature an element that was irreducibly evil... Bacon's Three Studies' put forward a less comfortable point of view".
 - 149 David Sylvester *About Modern Art* p319. It was a key quality he "found in Picasso and found lacking in Matisse". This relates to a recorded interview from March 1982. Hughes p316: Bacon was "apt to dismiss nearly everything painted in the twentieth century with bleak contempt".
 - 150 *ibid* John Russell
 - 151 At TEFAF Maastricht in March 2010, contact sheets of previously unseen photographs taken by, with or for Bacon were shown by the Michael Hoppen Gallery. As Peter Conrad described them: "Two bodies in a bare, drab room, experimentally trying all the things they can do to each other, from grappling, groping sex to choke holds and karate chops; here is a privileged, confidential glimpse of Francis Bacon's secret theatre, never seen before... flabby butchers in the stained, straining pants, obliged to wear swimming caps that make them look like medical orderlies kitted out for surgery" *Observer* 14 February 2010 – another example of Bacon's use of photography to define a composition; the bodies merging into a one abstract, brutal, calibrated demonstration, a polymorphous act to satisfy the voyeur, excite the artist, and provide the raw material for a painting.
 - 152 In the same issue of *Horizon* Bacon's lover and patron Eric Hall had written a supportive and influential review.
 - 153 Bacon once said "painting is its own language and is not translatable into words" – he reputedly objected to his paintings being read, in reality he just didn't want to be in the room at the time.
 - 154 John Berger is one of those writers who ask the questions the rest of us do not think to ask. And he answers those questions. But he also has his failings. For many years, one of those was Francis Bacon, of whose art he wrote "pain is watched through a screen, like soiled linen being watched through the round window of a washing machine". However, sometime after Bacon's death, reviewing an exhibition at the Maillol Museum in Paris in 2004, Berger revised his earlier criticisms and saw in the artist "someone who obsessively used the pictorial language and thematic references of some earlier painters – such as Velásquez, Michelangelo, Ingres or van Gogh. This 'continuity' makes the devastation of his vision more complete". Whereas, in the 1950s Berger had seen the rise of photography leading to a decline of painted portraits: "it seems to me unlikely that any important portraits will ever be painted again".
 - 155 Bridget Riley speaking in 1992 in the week after Bacon died "Bacon cannot be called an English artist. There is little trace of national school tradition in his work and for that alone he was a liberating influence. I admired him for his independence of spirit, for the stringent conditions he set himself, and for his sense of beauty: a terrible beauty perhaps, but one which is the measure to what he called 'the fact'".
 - 156 Questioned, analysed, and contextualised, he could be reticent and forthcoming about his sources in equal measure.
 - 157 John Richardson 'Bacon Agonistes' *New York Review of Books* vol56/20, 17 December 2009
 - 158 "We are born and we die", Bacon once told David Sylvester, "but in between, we give this purposeless existence a meaning by our drives." *Connaissance des Arts* April 1996
 - 159 Irony of ironies, the habitual blasphemer and dissolute, Francis Bacon died in a Spanish hospital run by Dominican nuns, the Sisters of Mercy.
 - 160 Anthony or Antony? *The Tribulations of St Antony* or *The Temptations of St Antony*? Is the saint in a state of misery or great affliction, or is he being enticed, undergoing a painful trial or experience? More importantly – St Antony the Great or St Anthony of Padua? Which saint? Everything points to the 4th century ascetic, beleaguered by picturesque demons in the desert, who reputedly lived to 105. But as one of the great Franciscans, and as a formidable foe of heresy and terror to heretics, the 13th century Doctor of the Church, Anthony of Padua originally from Lisbon has some appeal if few connections. The probable owner of this painting, a Portuguese humanist, Damião de Góis (1502-74) lived in the Netherlands between 1523 and 1544, marrying a local woman when he was there. When he returned to Portugal he presented the Papal Nuncio with two paintings by Bosch, one of *Antony* (usually assumed to be this one) and a *Temptation of Job*. Might De Góis have misinterpreted which Antony was the subject, could he have been misled into thinking which Antony it was in order to make the sale, or are we all possibly mistaken in thinking it is the ascetic Abbot Antony? The renowned thaumaturgist and 'hammer of the heretics', Anthony of Padua was a popular legendary medieval figure, widely celebrated and revered, especially 30 years after his death when his relics were moved, and his tongue was seen to be 'uninjured, fresh, and a lively red colour'. This is a subject for more research. *Si quaeris miracula... resque perditas* was the responsory of Fr Julian of Speyer invoking Anthony for the recovery of lost things.
 - 161 *The Tribulations of St Antony* (The Temptation of St Anthony) outer shutters *The Passion of Christ* Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, central panel 131.5x119cm, side shutters 131.5x53cm
 - 162 RH Marijnissen and P Ruyffelaere *Bosch* 1987 & 2007 p158
 - 163 The balance of qualified opinion supports authorship by Athanasius. Since the Reformation, Protestants generally disputed authorship, whereas Catholics maintain the authority. St Jerome refers to the *Vita* in his own life of Paul, without mentioning the author, but 15 years later repeatedly refers to Athanasius as author and Evagrius as its Latin translator. For the full text see *Select Works and Letters* vol IV of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series II. Also see T Vivian & AN Athanassakis with RA Greer (eds) *The Life of Antony by Athanasius of Alexandria* 2003. The Dominican Bishop of Morocco, Alphonsus Bonhomini added to the legend in 1342 with translations of Antonite stories, the most popular being about the sexually voracious Devil Queen, a demonic temptress who persists in provoking our hero. She appears to be offering a cup of wine, interpreted by some as a fake copy of the curative liquid that was poured over the saint's relics and served to those suffering from St Antony's Fire, and therefore mocking the work of the Hospital Order. Charles Cuttler believes the central panel shows precisely this wine being offered 'The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony by Jerome Bosch' *The Art Bulletin* XXXIX 1957 p118
 - 164 T Vivian & AN Athanassakis with RA Greer (eds) *The Life of Antony by Athanasius of Alexandria* 2003 pp92-3

- 165 Diarmid MacCulloch *A History of Christianity* 2009 p206
- 166 Athanasius had his own motives for promoting Antony's heroic austerity. A challenge to Christian unity in north Africa led the Emperor Constantine to sidestep the imperial legal system and appeal to Church leaders to sort matters out. Over time this developed to the point where councils of bishops were regularly summoned to resolve disputes within the Church, a mechanism that led to the bishops establishing power and jurisdiction independent of emperors, and the establishment of an imperial Church, its powers inextricably linked to the armies of the state. Reuniting warring churchmen became a theme of Constantine's reign that culminated in doctrinal consensus strong-armed at Nicaea (Iznik) in 325AD, something Athanasius was determined to promote, if necessary with fabricated stories of the Desert Fathers. The boundaries of acceptable beliefs within Christianity narrowed and a single imperial Church, backed by force, emerged. Catholic Christianity gained monopoly status throughout the Empire in an alliance that handed Constantine the doctrinal reins. It was the agreements formulated by the councils convened at his instigation from Nicaea onwards, under the supervision of Constantine, that radicals in the time of Bosch and Bruegel saw as a grave error in need of reassessment. The Nicene Creed was formulated at Constantinople in 381AD, together with the spirit of compromise later sealed at Chalcedon (now a neighbourhood of Istanbul) in 451AD, after the death of Athanasius, allowed the western Church of the Latin Rite to flourish for a thousand years. The crisis that then engulfed it is at the centre of the paintings discussed here. At the heart of the period of the first ecumenical councils, milestones in Church history was the Vulgate Bible, through which medieval Western Christianity almost exclusively knew of its faith. St Jerome's fourth-century translation went unchallenged until humanist preoccupation with words led to the excavation of its earlier Greek and Hebrew versions, the Tanakh and the Septuagint. Some were of little importance, hence in the Book of Exodus, Moses had worn a pair of horns as he delivered the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, something artists had long portrayed. Others were more significant, where the authority of the Church, rested on faulty translations of such theological importance as the doctrine of Purgatory, as Erasmus was later to demonstrate.
- 167 The other reference point frequently suggested as source material is Jacobus de Voragine's 13th century compendium *The Golden Legend* that was used to assist in the veneration of saints, for identification of saints to be invoked for specific assistance in healing and, in the case of St Antony, referred to for inspiration in overcoming both temptation and suffering, specifically with erysipelas, the gangrenous skin ailment known as 'St Antony's Fire', and ergotism that produced hallucinations, giving rise to ideas as to their stimulating some of the more inventive demonic fantasies of Bosch, but more significantly, the Antonite medical order founded to treat the disease. See De Voragine *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints* transl William Ryan 1993 pp93-6.
- 168 from the Greek *eremos* comes the word hermit, and *monachos* monk, paradoxically a mistranslation.
- 169 See Yona Pinson on the significance of the colour black and the Devil 'Connotations of Sin and Heresy in the Figure of the Black King in Some Northern Renaissance Adorations' *Artibus et Historiae* vol17/34 1996 pp159-175
- 170 Bosch painted Antony on several occasions, including the left hand panel of the *Hermit Saints* in Venice, and the disputed *Saint Anthony* in the Prado that may have been painted as early as 1462/68.
- 171 José de Sigüenza *Historia de la Orden de San Geronimo* c1604. For the translation into English, see *Bosch in Perspective* ed Snyder 1973 pp36-38. Macaronic is not a term we would use today in the sense that Sigüenza used it.
- 172 Sigüenza was surrounded by Bosch (or at least copies), "In the Chapter House there is one, another is in the prior's cell, two are in the Gallery of the Infanta, and in my own cell there is a fine one in which I sometimes read and lose myself". See *Sigüenza* vol II p637, 1907-9 ed Snyder p37 for the translation, and Unverfehrt for copies *Hieronymus Bosch. Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* 1980 pp 79-82, 151-186.
- 173 Felipe de Guevara *Commentaries on painting* c1560, from *Bosch in Perspective* James Snyder (ed) 1973 p28
- 174 "At the close of the mediaeval period St Anthony achieved his apogee in art, literature, and the popular mind" Charles D Cuttler 'The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony by Jerome Bosch' *The Art Bulletin* 1959 XXXIX pp109
- 175 Combe ("Alchemic symbolism appears for the first time in Bosch's universe" p27 and "alchemists held the heretic notion that sexual duality was at the bottom of the creation and evolution of this world" p34) also Dixon, Van Lennep, Chailley, Bergman
- 176 Charles D Cuttler 'The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony by Jerome Bosch' *The Art Bulletin* 1959 XXXIX pp109-126 ("The prophecy of 1499 of the imminent coming of the end of the world was based on the numerous conjunctions in Pisces predicted for February 1524" p120 leading Cuttler to note that belief in the influence of these conjunctions suggested a dating of the triptych c1500-05; furthermore he sees a Florentine engraving of the planet Luna c1460 as the artist's source material), Andrew Pigler 'Astrology and Jerome Bosch' *Burlington Magazine* 1950 XCII 566 pp132-6
- 177 Ludwig von Baldass, the commission probably came from the Antonite brotherhood, a hospital order of monks, for a modest altarpiece (the dimensions are a little small)
- 178 Jeanne van Waadeniojen 'The Lisbon Triptych by Jeroen Bosch: an annotation Study' *Jérôme Bosch et son entourage et son autres études. Colloque XIV September Bruges-Rotterdam 2001* Hélène Verougstraete et Roger van Schoute (eds) 2003 pp16-21
- 179 Lynda Harris *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch* 1995
- 180 HW Janson 'Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance' *Studies of the Warburg Institute* 1952 vol20 pp166f
- 181 Bax 1949 p88, Lotte Brand Philip 'The Prado Epiphany of Jerome Bosch' *Art Bulletin* 35/4 December 1953 p267-94 on the prevailing belief in the Antichrist legend p270
- 182 Charles D Cuttler 'The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony by Jerome Bosch' *The Art Bulletin* 1957 XXXIX pp109-126
- 183 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* transl Michael Bullock and Henry Mins 1966 p
- 184 see Linfert p25 re Combe's mind: "the world of the Late Antique Egyptian secret hermetical lore of alchemistic affinities and metamorphoses becomes, in art, the fountainhead of the temptations that will endlessly plague the saintly Anthony and be repulsed by him"
- 185 Fraenger lay waste to standard ideas with all the reckless energy of a late entrant in a stock car race. I always thought of this in part as a matter of provocative mischief. But to be fair (as if we should), by demonstrating a different approach, he did at least sharpen everyone up and enliven the debate.
- 186 RL Delevoy *Bosch* 1960 "Dare we assume that the painter resorted to some phantasmogenic drug so as to give free rein in his subconscious self"
- 187 Delevoy again!
- 188 Kurt Falk *The Unknown Hieronymus Bosch* 2008 – a rather amazing idea considering (a) Rosicrucianism was a late 16th/early 17th century phenomenon with the movement's 'partisan literature', the *Fama Fraternitatis* that described the life of Christian Rosencreutz appearing in 1612, the *Confessio Fraternitatis* in 1614, and *The Chymical Wedding* by Johann Valentin Andreae (it was published anonymously but he claimed authorship) in 1616, and (b) was German-speaking central European in origin centring around the coterie of Rudolph II (1552-1612) with characters such as John Dee (1527-1609), and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) – all dates after the death of Bosch. Sometimes called an Invisible College of Mystic Sages, it relied on the 'new alchemy' of Paracelsus (1493-1541) and the Rosicrucian Cabala, developed in the Levant by exiled Spanish Jews – all of which is a far

- cry from 's-Hertogenbosch.
- 189 Linfert saw the devils and monsters as more than simply sin and temptation; he thought Bosch "rather believes the world's balance to be disturbed than it being ruled only by vice". *Jheronimus Bosch* 1970 concise ed 1972 p82
 - 190 RL Delevey *Bosch* 1960 p87 "une ultime tentative de restaurer un humanisme défaillant et une troublante préface à la Renaissance"
 - 191 Ethan Matt Kavalier has put forward a theory of 'Microarchitecture circa 1500 as Model for the Sacred' that in their structure and invention became demonstration pieces with the "potential to suggest the manifestation of divine will" at the second Bosch conference, subsequently published in *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn, Jos Koldeweij (eds) 2010 pp191-204
 - 192 Gospel According to St Matthew 24:21 "For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be".
 - 193 Jeanne van Waadeniojen 'The Lisbon Triptych by Jeroen Bosch: an annotation' *Colloque XIV* 2001 September 2003 p16
 - 194 The monstrous creatures are described by Athanasius as 'no more than empty phantoms, which disappear in the face of the Cross as though they had never existed'.
 - 195 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1965 p357
 - 196 The phrase is from Miep Gies' own account, hiding and supporting eight Jews (the Franks, the van Pels and Dr Pfeffer) in Amsterdam in 1942-44 - "it was nothing extraordinary" she said. She gathered up the scattered pages of Anne's diary on 4 August 1944, and every year mourned her lost friends on that date.
 - 197 Reuterswärd 1970 p88 "I should prefer to abstain from a closer interpretation of these details, partly because they have been interpreted so diversely, and partly because their primary meaning, their symbolization of something evil, is clear in any case".
 - 198 De Tolnay p76
 - 199 See Cuttler pp124 and 126
 - 200 As Charles De Tolnay points out in *Hieronymus Bosch* 1965 p358 and Marijnissen in *Bosch* 2007 p157 "The inscription upon the note carried in the beak of the bird-like monster has been read variously as (1) *Grasso* (written upside down), which supposedly refers to simony, [Combe 1946 p85 n55] (2) *protio* (in mirror-writing), an abbreviation of *protestatio*, to be understood as a mock protest on the part of the demons against the torture of the saint, [Bax, 1949 p10] (3) *oisuif* or *oisity*, taken to mean oisif, an allusion to the laziness of the monster-brid skating along so as to avoid having to lift its legs, [Cuttler, 1957 pp114-5] and (4) *bosco*, proof that Bosch identified himself with Saint Anthony." [Wertheim Aymès 1961 p37] De Tolnay concludes it is a "letter of indulgence". Jean Michel Massing believes that the documents being consulted by the devils contain faked evidence against the saint - false accusers, huddled together "in their vain attempts to gather... the sins of the saint". 'The Devils Under the Bridge' appears in a series of essays in honour of EH Gombrich *Sight & Insight* edited by John Onions 1994 p115
 - 201 Chares D Cuttler 'The Lisbon Temptation of St Anthony by Jerome Bosch' *The Art Bulletin* XXXIX June 1957 p125
 - 202 variously catalogued as *The Temptation of St Anthony* and *St Anthony Attacked by Demons*
 - 203 EH Gombrich *The Story of Art* pkt ed 2006 p212 "These prints became yet another means through which the artists of Europe learned of each other's ideas. At that time it was not considered dishonourable to take over an idea or a composition from another artist".
 - 204 The image was beefed up by Michelangelo with the introduction of some Renaissance realism added to the Gothic fantasy of the original, in what has become tagged as 'Michelangelo's first painting' by the Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth following its conservation at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. After historical research and stylistic analysis, the picture, dated c1487 or 8, is one of only four known easel paintings by Michelangelo, and follows on from his early drawn copies of work by Giotto and Masaccio at a time when he was on Ghirlandaio's payroll as an assistant. Despite being completed when Michelangelo was only 12 or 13 years old, the Kimball says "it potentially provides clues as to how Michelangelo came to settle on the colour palette he used in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel" - something which is debatable. Set to become a cult object (it is the only Michelangelo in the USA) the painting was last exhibited in Paris in 1874 since when it had been kept privately and largely forgotten by the art world. Michelangelo's biographer and student, Ascanio Condivi, noted how the young Michelangelo had been granted access to the prints and drawings collection of Ghirlandaio and how the Schongauer print in particular had attracted his attention. Vasari mentions it (1550) and Benedetto Varchi told the story of the painting in his funeral oration for Michelangelo in 1564.
 - 205 *Summa theologica* question 114, article 4, quoted by Cuttler 1957 p109
 - 206 *Malleus Malificarum* was only the first of the demonologies but it was tremendously influential. Its sensational content was a rabid mix of hearsay and folklore, popular culture and inquisitorial questions and answers, set out as a scholastic treatise. It is particularly misogynistic and obsessed with the sexual aspects of pacts with the Devil. The Devil seduced these women who, morally weaker than men and therefore more vulnerable to diabolical temptation, governed by their carnal lusts. Some of its more outrageous statements would be distinctly comical if they had not been believed: witches could make the male member disappear or might produce a bowl of members from which you could choose the member that most suited your purposes.
 - 207 Charles D Cuttler 1957 p112 f16, with reference to the Master of Mary of Burgundy.
 - 208 Charles D Cuttler 'Witchcraft in a Work by Bosch' *The Art Quarterly* vol XX 1957 p129
 - 209 Aquinas *Summa theologica* I Q 114 article 4
 - 210 Rosemary Ellen Guiley *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft and Wicca* 2008 (3rd ed) p13
 - 211 *ibid* p13
 - 212 Cuttler p131
 - 213 *Mater Dolorosa* from an assumed diptych *Christ and the Virgin* attributed to Workshop of Bouts, or Dieric Bouts the Younger, was "the instigator of the [overall] project" according to Viola. Oil on panel c1480-1500 38.7x30.3cm Art Institute of Chicago
 - 214 "[This is] an age where theory has really taken over... I love that quote from Proust where he says "A work of art that contains a theory is like an article of clothing on which the price tag has been left!" BBC Radio 3 interview 22 August 2003
 - 215 BBC Radio 3 interview
 - 216 The Roman Catholic Church, once the greatest sponsor of art in the world appears to be making its peace with contemporary practitioners. In 1947 Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* acknowledged that sacred art, while reverential, should still reflect the spirit of our time". In the 1960s Paul VI reinstated the Vatican tradition of collecting since when over 500 contemporary works have entered its Museum. And despite the Church's rejection 'for being excessively abstract' of six rhomboid canvases it had itself commissioned for the church in San Giovanni Rotondo, the Holy See has announced its intention of returning to the Venice Biennale with its own pavilion. The Pontifical Council for Culture has set up a committee to commission the artists and a benefactor has been found to sponsor the project. Bill Viola's name is on the Council's provisional list of artists to be involved. In a piece written by the improbably named Barbie Nardeau, Newsweek of 12 September 2008 headlined *The Vatican Breaks Its Da Vinci Code*.
 - 217 Viola interviewed by Neil MacGregor, August 1999; unpublished transcript BBC *Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ* in art screened 2 April 2000. "This painting has always fascinated me. The idea of the calm

- centre in the chaotic, threatening circle of the world is something that I've been preoccupied with for a long time. One way that you can look at religious practice is the sense of perfecting the individual so they can stand calmly and securely in whatever turbulent situation they might find themselves in... The extraordinary thing about that image is Christ staring right out of the frame towards us. He's found the only way out, right out of the picture. And who is he looking at? Us... he's looking right into our eyes."
- 218 Marco Livingstone essay in the *Encounters* catalogue 2000 p322
- 219 Seen in substantial installations of several pieces Viola's work can become overkill. Major exhibitions of a dozen or more videos can become overwhelming. Moving on from poetic meditations on Christian iconography and belief, Zen Buddhism and Sufism drawing him as much as Christianity, in 2004 he embarked on *The Tristan Project* conceived as a 'background' to Wagner's opera. The video was shown with and without musical accompaniment in several cities including Rotterdam in 2001. *Jheronimus Bosch* Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Modern Section catalogue 2.45 Bill Viola (New York 1951) *The Quintet of the Astonished* 1999 (inspired by Bosch's *Crowning with Thorns*, London National Gallery), video London, Anthony d'Offay Gallery. Covering 40 years of work, the largest retrospective ever of Bill Viola was staged at the Grand Palais in Paris in 2014. Organised by Jérôme Neutres, the exhibition was arranged around three metaphysical questions: Who am I? Where am I? Where am I going?
- 220 5 April 1474 is the date on a legal document bearing his name. It also bears the name of his father thus he may not have reached his majority, probably 24 years of age. 26 July 1474 marks the date of a financial transaction, after which there is nothing recorded until a document dated 3 January 1481 giving part of a house and grounds to his brother. By 15 June 1481 he appears acting on behalf of his wife Aleit/Aleyt/Aleid in a dispute with her brother. Sometime during 1480-81 Bosch purchased the wings of an old altarpiece according to the accounts for the year kept by the Confraternity of Our Lady in 's-Hertogenbosch. On 17 May 1498 Bosch is recorded hiring three people to press outstanding debtors for payment and, pointing to a planned period of absence, gave a mandate to Johannes sGreven to deal with his affairs. Accounts for 1503-4 note a commission for three escutcheons. In September 1504 Philip the Fair arranged an advance payment to Bosch, commissioning a *Last Judgement*. These dates all come from Marijnissen, van Dijk and Vink.
- 221 Bernard Aikema 'Hieronymus Bosch and Italy' *Hieronymus Bosch - New Insights Into His Life and Work* ed Koldewej, Vermet, and van Kooij (eds) 2001 p31. Aikema notes that in his *Notizia d'opere del disegno* Marcantonio Michiel reported seeing three works by 'Hieronimo Bosch' in the collection of the Cardinal, Domenico Grimani (1461-1523) pictures that do not match those in Venice today. c1528 Marino Grimani, the Cardinal's nephew, shipped a number of paintings to Rome, including a Flemish painting with two wings about the *Last Judgment*, a Flemish oil painting with a *Hell* and two canvases, attributed to Bosch, that included the *Temptations of St Anthony*. We do not know if the *Hell* is the same *Hell* mentioned by Michiel, nor is it clear whether the *Hereafter* panels that are still in Venice today, can be identified as the wings of the *Last Judgment* triptych referred to c1528.
- 222 Lucas van Dijk 'Jheronimus Bosch inspired by People in his Environment: Research from the archival Sources' *Jheronimus Bosch. His Sources* Eric de Bruyn and Jos Koldewej (eds) 2010 pp116-117; Jos Koldewej 'Jheronimus Bosch and his city' *Hieronymus Bosch: the complete paintings and drawings* Koldewej, Vandenbroeck and Vermet (eds) 2001 pp38-9. Note Van Dijk p117 "It can be stated with certainty that Jheronimus never undertook a pilgrimage" and later on the same page: "The question remains to what extent Jheronimus undertook a pilgrimage himself? Nothing conclusive can be said about that."
- 223 22 February 1300 the Bull *Antiquorum fida relatio* was published, vaguely citing earlier precedents and granting "great remissions and indulgences for sins" that are to "be obtained by visiting the city of Rome".
- 224 Dante went to Rome and referred to the Giubbileo in the *Inferno* (xviii, 29).
- 225 The Pope now seeks entry to St Peter's but the ritual for both the opening and sealing up of the door remained substantially the same from 1500 until 1975 when some modifications were instituted.
- 226 The French armies of Charles VIII had come to the support of Milan in 1495, and swept through the peninsula to the Kingdom of Naples in a march unmatched since Hannibal in the Second Punic Wars. The League of Venice had been formed in 1495 as a defensive response to this success. It aligned the Spain and Sicily of Ferdinand with Venice, the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire. However, with the accession of Louis XII to the French throne, Pope Alexander VI quit the League, realigned the Papacy with France and the delicate balancing act that had been created fell apart. In 1499 armies of Louis took Milan and in 1500 the French and Spanish monarchs divided the Kingdom of Naples between them. The Papacy was left to take over most of Romagna.
- 227 Even Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) who had married a daughter of the Duke of Milan, Bianca Maria Sforza, had postponed visits to Italy on the advice of the Pope due to the fighting that for over the next half century involved most of the city-states, the Papal states, the Ottomans, and the monarchies of western Europe. Alliances, counter-alliances and betrayal were to be the order of the day, as disagreements over partition led to more fighting. This continued to be a problem as most of the cities and towns were captured two or three times by troops of the various forces. Spain became dominant in Italy after 1530, but did not install military garrisons in the major towns until a century later. Hence its hold on power was nebulous at best. Only the Republic of Venice and the Duchy of Savoy were still strong enough to enable them to maintain an independent policy.
- 228 Whatever Romans may say, Rome is in southern Italy. (The north begins around Orvieto.) Even today, Rome is a rather frightening place for other Italians. It is a city of glimpses, a richly decorated ceiling through a window, of ruins and trees across the Tiber, a courtyard of a palazzo, whose great doors are normally kept tightly shut. Bosch did not record any of this because he did not get there. If we are to believe that Bruegel did go there, are we seriously expected to believe that no scrap of drawing, no notes, nothing at all, remains of the trip? (see chapter 7)
- 229 For Grimani's legacy see Marilyn Perry *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol41, 1978 pp215-244
- 230 *The Hermit Saints* 85x60cm, side shutters 85x29.5cm. *The Crucified Female Martyr* 105x63cm, side shutters 105x28cm. Both Palazzo Ducale.
- 231 The one area of the painting that has certainly not been retouched or overpainted is the face of the saint. If it was intended to be Wilgefortis, then her single, renowned, identifying feature, the famous beard, was never included. Known images of the saint without a beard have now been shown to have had it removed. To further add to the confusion over identity there are various versions of both her story and that of St Julia as to whether they were nailed or tied to a cross. However, Julia was not a royal and therefore would not have worn a crown. Known as St Julia of Corsica she was especially revered on the Italian peninsula, the island being part of Genoa, a Spanish client-state in the lifetime of Bosch. (Dollmayr was the first to select St Julia in 1898. Bax disagreed because she was virtually unknown in northern Europe. In 1961 he chose Wilgefortis. Henry Luttkhuizen suggested Eulalia as did Dixon 2003 p153, and Silver 2006 p208 n21. Intriguingly, although he later regretted doing it (see HNA book reviews 2012) Silver proposed a relative chronology for Bosch paintings, taking as his starting point, the Venice panels that he put at around 1500. He does, however, say that this need not imply an Italian trip for the artist; stating that they could have been exported by merchants.)
- 232 Not intended as such, but an amusing addition to the question of identification came from Caterina Limentani Virdis in 2010 at the 2nd International Bosch Conference, linking Wilgefortis (*Virgo Fortis* – strong virgin, and her relationship to *Mulier Virilis* – manly woman, used in reference to female martyrs who rejected their sexuality) to Pope Joan; the man at the foot of the cross has not, as generally believed, fainted (he's dead) and is the saint's divine fiancé, Christ. Virdis then picked up on Aikema 2001 with regards the slightly more interesting idea that Cardinal Grimani obtained the painting through

- his links to the Jewish community in the city including Abraham ben Meir de Balmes, his doctor, and Daniel van Bomberghen, an Antwerp publisher and merchant.
- 233 For once we may agree with Baldass who believed that the wings originally belonged to another triptych *Hieronymus Bosch* 1959 2nd ed p237. This view is certainly in line with De Tolnay's view in 1937 that the wings came from an earlier unfinished work. Marijnissen disagrees, because the unpainted edges of the three panels appear to him to have been made simultaneously: see pxii of the supplement. I still disagree.
- 234 The director of the Rijksmuseum, Van Schendel, in conversation with De Tolnay in 1937. Also Moschini on x-ray results of the work, 1952 *Bolletino d'arte* XXXVII pp79,81. Slatkes 1975 pp335-345, Suzanne Laemers 2001 pp76-85.
- 235 The certainty that this was a commissioned work (Vandenbroeck *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* 2001 p172) due to the inclusion of donor portraits, disappears if we accept the theories of either De Tolnay or Baldass which, having spent time with the work, I am inclined to do.
- 236 The Bosch 500 Research Project finally, in 2013, laid to rest belief in the bearded lady. There is no beard.
- 237 It is for this reason that Slatkes in his much-referred-to article identified the similarities with a St Julia in the Church of S Salvatore in Brescia and one in Bergamo. September 1975 *The Art Bulletin* vol LVII no3 pp335-345
- 238 'The Anonymous Morelli - Der Anonimo Morelliano (Mercanton Michiels notiziz d'opere del disegno)' see Theodor Frimmel *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte* NF1 1888 p102 - 'In casa del cardinal Grimano' and Jennifer Fletcher 'Mercantonio Michiel: his friends and his collection' *The Burlington Magazine* 123/941, 1981 pp453-467
- 239 Peter Klein *Hieronymus Bosch - New Insights Into His Life and Work* 2001 pp124-6 and Bernard Vermet *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* 2001 pp84-99
- 240 Jan Bialostocki covers the Leonardo-Dürer-Bosch sources, relations, and appropriations; the Netherlandish circulation of copies of Leonardo's drawings in the 1520s, ie after the death of Bosch, and that Dürer may have taken to Venice an "experimental picture - the old love, deeply rooted in the northern mind, for the grotesque and the ugly", its potential influence; and the Venetian development of half-length pictures after 1470 "Opus Quinque Dierum": Dürer's 'Christ among the doctors' and Its Sources' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol22 no1/2 1959 pp17-34. Girolamo Savoldo, active from c1520, demonstrates a rapport with the Bruges *Last Judgement*. His wife was Dutch.
- 241 Irving L Zupnick suggests that the doors to *The Haywain* triptych, *The Pedlar*, "bears an uncanny resemblance to a similar figure in a picture in the Accademia di Venice, painted shortly after 1490 by Giovanni Bellini, one view of which is that it is "a warning that virtue should beware of vice". He goes on to say that "The pose of Bellini's sinewy striding figure, whose emaciation is more typical of Bosch's characterizations than it is of Bellini's, exemplifies uncertainty, or resolution made irresolute. Our warrior is a sort of classicized Everyman, fighting life's battles in defense of his soul". 'Bosch's Representation of Acedia and the Pilgrimage of Everyman' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 19, 1968 pp118-120
- 242 Silver agrees, see *Hieronymus Bosch* 2006 p127. Friedländer makes the same point with regards Bosch in *Early Netherlandish Paintings* vol V p47 "It is true that a signature alone does not guarantee his authorship. There is no dearth of signed pictures that, by their quality, must be discarded as copies." Gibson points out, with reference to the 'Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins' *Oud Holland* vol 87, 1973 p205 n2 "It is difficult to determine whether this represents the artist's own signature, or was added by a later hand; similar inscriptions appear on pictures which are obviously copies or pastiches after Bosch." In 1988, Gerlach considered five pictures bearing Bosch signatures were forgeries; in 1980 Unverfehrt had thought eight; in 2002, Vandenbroeck suggested 15. The suggestion that the Bosch signature appeared after he was admitted to the Confraternity of Our Lady in 1486/7 has been substantiated on the basis of dendrochronological tests, eg *St John on Patmos* 63x43cm Gemäldegalerie Berlin c1489-95.
- 243 Jheronimus' contemporaries Alart Duhamel used the name Bosche, as did Aert van Panhedel and his son Gielis who both went by the alias Bossche.
- 244 Signatures may not only be forged, they can be convincingly added at a later date. A large painting, long considered a masterpiece by Jan Mandijn and apparently bearing his monogram, has been reattributed following microscopic investigation that revealed, among things, the initials IMH were applied long after the picture was painted: *Christ Carrying the Cross* after Jheronimus Bosch c1540 107x149cm Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp. See Matthijs IJssink and Jos Koldeweij *La Montée au Calvaire d'après Jérôme Bosch* 2011 pp45-7
- 245 Carl Sagan *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* 1996 ch10 'The Dragon in My Garage' pp169-188 and ch12 'The Fine Art of Baloney Detection' pp201-218. Francis Bacon *Novum Organon* 1620
- 246 One of the sayings central to understanding Italy may be apposite - 'if it is not true, it is well observed', or more loosely, 'if it is not true it should be', and 'even if it is not true in a literal sense, in a deeper sense it is true'.
- 247 Mary McCarthy 'The Return of the Native' *Venice Observed* 1956 p242
- 248 For example, Combe, in 1946
- 249 Bax *Hieronymus Bosch his picture-writing deciphered* 1949 transl MA Bax-Botha 1979 pp 13-22
- 250 Linfert sees no temptation in this wing of the picture!
- 251 *ibid* p146
- 252 *ibid* p109
- 253 Silver p232
- 254 After 29 March 1516 Jews they were not allowed to live in Venice proper. The Venetians had already tested separation and enclosure policies elsewhere, and now the Jews were segregated, heavily taxed and subjected to a variety of restrictions. They lived on Spinalunga, today known as Giudecca, where a complex of ghettos were eventually created on the site of a gun foundry. (Ghetto - *gettare*, the casting of gun metal. A *getto* was the cast.) The buildings all faced inwards to prevent Jews from looking at Christians when the Blessed Sacrament was paraded through the streets. The Jews were locked in at night. The only profession the Jews were allowed to enter was medicine, and the only trade money-lending, yet Giudecca became Europe's principal centre for Hebraic publishing. Red cloaks and gowns recur in Venice: Proust's narrator sees one in the distance in the distinctive cloak of an aristocratic fraternity, that reminds him of one worn by Albertine, his lost love; Nicolas Roeg's movie *Don't Look Now* based on the Daphne du Maurier short story, features the ambiguity of a child in a red Macintosh and a red coat worn by a murderous dwarf. The red-coated child motif was picked up by Steven Spielberg in his film *Schindler's List* for the scene of the ghetto round-up, inspired by Roma Ligoeka, a young girl known around the ghetto for her striking red coat.
- 255 The 'Antichrist' that Bax refers to was 'the man of sin', a 'false prophet', and frequently a Jewish Anti-Christ, the 15th century witnessing progressively more and more anti-Semitism across Europe resulting in extensive persecution, execution, and expulsion. The end of the 15th century had seen the greatest disaster for the Jewish people since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, the Sephardic diaspora following Jewish expulsion from Spain. Erasmus hated Jews, apparently refusing invitations to go to Spain because 'it was full of Jews'. Humanists fascinated by the Cabala appear to have felt little warmth to the people who created it. If anything, cabalistic writings had been 'rescued' from the Jews. Jews were simply enemies of Christ. They joined other groups of scapegoats that were available: witches, Muslims and alternative Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic. Take your pick. For Luther, as he continued to become disillusioned with the fate of the world, anticipating its imminent end when he had expected the Jews to convert to Christianity *en masse*, increasingly frustrated that this was not happening, he indulged in the violently

- anti-Semitic writing that became a blueprint for the Nazis, idolised both as a German hero and for his ideas. (Luther's Works, Volume 47 *The Christian in Society* IV 1971 pp 268-293 might have been written as a blueprint for Kristallnacht.) Artists of survival, the Jews moved to central and eastern Europe where a number of Yiddish communities thrived. In Poland, the 16th century was a golden age for the Jews. They held a privileged position, as did Protestant groups. Calvin was far less interested in the Last Days and consequently the question of Jewish conversions far less important to him than they were to Luther. Above all there was the toleration of Amsterdam and the Netherlands where synagogues became a tourist attraction by the 17th century. See also The Second Epistle of St Paul to the Thessalonians 2:3-13, The First Epistle of St John 2:18-22, The Apocalypse of St John 19:20-21. The wearing of red capes and hats by Jews in Venice – *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1971 vol 4. Identifying marks and 'distinguishable dress' for both Jews and Muslims were ordered by Innocent III: yellow badges were to be worn by Jews. However, the badges varied over time and from country to country; white or yellow rings, stars, wheels or circles all appeared. The rule was never consistently enforced. In Salzburg women wore yellow veils and attached bells to their dresses. Robes of blue, green, yellow, or tan were worn in German-speaking central Europe. Yellow collars were later ordered in Germany. The *Judenhut* – a cone-shaped headdress was less common than badges, but over time they appeared in both red and yellow. Red stars were worn in Portugal. Yellow or red and white badges were to be worn in France. In Poland there were never any regulations as to Jewish dress. The 15th c Spanish 'badge of shame' was sometimes red but this conflicted with circular patches of yellow with a red 'bull's eye' worn on pale green clothes ordered by Queen Maria in 1397 for the Jews of Catalonia. In Sicily the badges were blue, in the Papal States yellow, in Venice always red. Red hats with full-length robes were worn whilst across the rest of the peninsula yellow hats and badges gradually became the norm throughout the Middle Ages. With Jewish immigration from Spain after 1492, Portugal after 1497, and Provence a year later, the signifying symbols across Italy became mixed. Paul IV reinforced yellow badges in 1555. Andrew Colin Gow 'The Middle Ages See Red' *The 'Red Jews': Antisemitism in the Apocalyptic Age 1200-1600*. For Venetian tolerance of Jews (and the wearing of red) Peter Ackroyd *Venice* 2009 pp45-50. For the use of red in Flanders and Brabant see Koldewij *Geloof & Geluk. Sieraad en Devotie in middeleeuws Vlaanderen / Foi et Bonne Fortune. Parure et dévotion en Flandre Médiévale* 2006. Setting out a broad spectrum of late medieval badges and related objects within their cultural-historical context, pp40-41 note a variety of circumstances in which the colour was worn: red scarves as a sign of infamy tied on to prostitutes at their execution, the use made of red threads in the grey woollen clothing of lepers to hide their dripping blood, and red armbands, red buttons, red ribbons, red aiguillettes, etc., etc., all to signify the unclean or immoral character of the wearer.
- 256 On 13 October 2010, Mario Sepúlveda was the second of 'Los 33' to emerge from the San José gold and copper mine in Chile after 69 days trapped 622m underground. When asked by a reporter, "How are the miners?" Chile's mining minister, Laurence Golborne replied, "Calmer than the journalists". The global television audience for the 22 hours 37 minutes rescue was larger than watched the World Cup Final.
- 257 Angela Vanhaelen and Bronwen Wilson 'The Erotics of Looking: Materiality, Solicitation and Netherlandish Visual Culture' a special issue of *Art History* 2012 vol35 issue 5 pp874-885. Whereas Vanhaelen and Wilson wrote in their introduction of "sensual encounters with pictures" challenging the "familiar interpretive models of iconography, verisimilitude and social art history" aiming to show "how descriptive works announce themselves", and "actively solicit the beholder's engagement" their interest lay in pictures where the narrative was suppressed. Bret Rothstein provocatively describes the encounter between the artist, the viewer and the artwork, as an 'erotics of interpretation'. With Joanna Woodall he describes "interpretation as intercourse – a charged conversation between the generic figure of the artist and beholders who could simultaneously delight in, and experience a degree of anxiety about, the pleasures offered at the table of representation".
- 258 The power of the audience is recognised again today with its involvement in just about everything. In the memorable words of the media critic, Jay Rosen, "the people formerly known as the audience" have become protagonists: readers write, viewers pick up a camera, listeners speak, no longer is news the exclusive preserve of highly centralised Big Media. Blogs have 'given the press to us'; podcasting gives you your own radio station; shooting, editing and distributing video via the Internet is child's play; 'we can edit the news sending items to our own front page'. We may behave like a 16th century groundling at the Globe, join 'in' the theatre of Brecht, Artaud, Peter Brook – 'storm the stage', participate in 'interactive theatre', or use audience-feedback dials (Patrick Healy *New York Times* 25 June 2013), join the debate about anything, communicate, share – users taking control of their own media. (Rosen credits Dan Gillmore for the term 'former audience.') Rosen, NYU professor, and author of the award winning PressThink, a weblog about journalism – archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_fmnr.html
- 259 Todd M Richardson *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* 2007 p14
- 260 *ibid* p14
- 261 Ann Hamilton, who represented the USA at the Venice Biennale in 1999 is one exponent. In 2012 her *event of a thread* at the Park Avenue Armory in New York required audience participation on swings in order to appreciate its 'relational aesthetic' of 'active and contemplative' experience. Carsten Höller's *Test Site*, a stomach-churning 56m long helter-skelter slide at Tate Modern in 2006 was another. The public experienced the art at speeds of up to 50kph as they dropped up to 27m on one of three chutes connecting the galleries to the Turbine Hall. Charles Thomson, a long-standing critic of the Tate criticized the idea: "slides are not art".
- 262 Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition* 1958 reprinted 1971 pp136-9, 167-74
- 263 Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1817
- 264 "In most cultures, there is no clear line separating myth from folk or fairy tale... The Nordic languages have only one word for both: *saga*. German has retained the word *Sage* for myths, while fairy stories are called *Märchen*. It is unfortunate that both the English and French names for these stories emphasize the role of fairies in them – because in most, no fairies appear." Bruno Bettelheim *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* 1991 pp25-6
- 265 Kathryn M Rudy *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* 2011; Jos Koldewij 'Lijfelijke en geestelijke pelgrimage: materiële 'souvenirs' van spirituele pelgrimage' *Geen povere schoonheid. Laat-middeleeuwse kunst in verband met de Moderne Devotie* Kees Veelenturf (ed) 2000 pp222-252
- 266 Gospel according to St John 18:37-8 "Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him: What is truth?"
- 267 Gospel according to St John 8:31
- 268 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:12 "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face."

5

The Spirit of the Age II

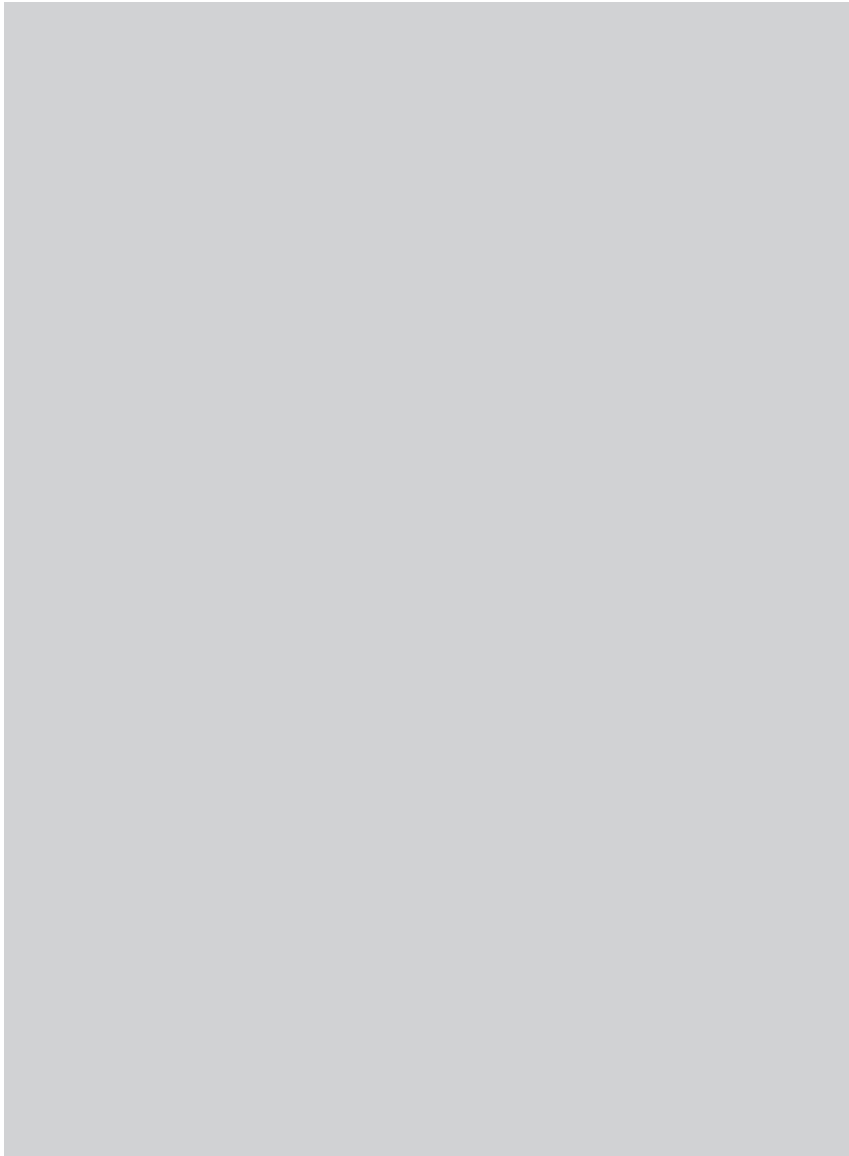
The lessons of history

A New Heaven and a New Earth

At the crossroads of medieval mystery and Renaissance humanism

The enemy within

Adapt or perish – the message of history



128 Francis Bacon *Figure Writing Reflected in Mirror* 1976 © The Estate of Francis Bacon.
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The lessons of History

"Stories only happen to people who can tell them" Chris Nawrat

"The past is not past. It is present here and now" James Joyce

MANY ARE CAUTIOUS about the lessons of history. The problem with the lessons of history is that we try to transpose two different situations and pretend that what happened in one year or in one era, is directly relevant to today. It is indirectly relevant, but if one tries to draw too precise a parallel we are liable to make mistakes. Acton said that history has nothing to teach us except that history has nothing to teach us; something we would do well to remember.

History is inescapable. We carry our past with us: the burden of humanity. But our past does not own us; we own it. It is not history but memory, reformed and remade in our own image. Memory is historical but it is transient and partial. Memory may be unreliable; its cousin, nostalgia, can be irrational; our judgements upon it frequently relative. History is to society what memory is to the individual; without it, we do not know who we are and cannot make decisions about where we should be going. The past is the only map we have. With disarming candour, Voltaire described history as a set of tricks we play on the dead. It can at times seem just one puzzle after another. But then, the dead always escape us. They will never perform for our entertainment, never produce another picture. If we wait to hear from them "We are doomed to be forever hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot."¹

Stories are born of history. They are not beholden to it – and neither is art that seeks to portray those stories. An individual work of art is a very minor episode in history but it can shape our image of the past. The artist, just like historians, presents a version of events placing them in a certain light. Every time a brush sets out on a journey across a canvas a world is being created. A touch here, a dab there, an effect of the light in the background can prove their empathy or show off their mastery. The dead will always escape us.

We are left chasing shadows. All history is a construction, telling stories that coexist with asking questions. Artifice, illusion, deceit even. As with art so with history. The artist's task was 'to make you feel... to make you see' according to Joseph Conrad. Historians cannot all be artists, but something of that spirit should inform their task. While the nature of memory may be constant, the nature of history has changed radically over my lifetime, for better and for worse. The divide between the academic and the popular has become a chasm. Much of historical scholarship is cluttered with unintelligible jargon, driven by the concerns of the present and failing to convey just how different the past really was.

What a difference 500 years makes. Or does it? Art and history frame things in different ways. Occasionally they become one. History at its most basic requires two things, first for something to happen, and second for someone to tell the story. Bosch and Bruegel told the stories, alerting us to what people were thinking and what was happening at a turning point in history.

A New Heaven and a New Earth

"No revolution however drastic has ever involved a total repudiation of what came before it"
Patrick Collinson²

EVERYTHING IS the cause of everything. The Reformation can be made as responsible as one wants for a watershed in history. In a messy world, a vast landscape of contingency, it came to symbolise liberation, emancipation of the mind, a precondition of so much that happened in the 16th century. Would the world of science change? The Church condemned Galileo and it took over 300 years for a Pope to admit there had been a mistake. The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were, according to Patrick Collinson, "the blast furnace in which the modern state was formed". The wars of religion and the secular appropriation of ecclesiastical powers and property facilitated the process of state-building. According to the German sociologist Max Weber, the Reformation was responsible for opening minds that lead to the 'miracle of the West' and had a great deal to do with the rise of capitalism and industrial civilisation, providing an ethical motive for the accumulation of wealth.³ Yet the world of magic, witches, alchemy, Apocalypse, Heaven and Hell, lived on.

The Early Modern world of historians is not modern at all. It had more in common with what went before than what came after. Fervent progress, a new consciousness, an awareness of what might be, and fundamental belief in a new Heaven and a new Earth, were all now coupled with turmoil and catastrophe. What distinguished the modern European from medieval Christendom was a way of thinking. There was a growing conviction that mankind could master the world in which it lived. The great Renaissance figures were full of self-confidence. Their God-given ingenuity could and should be used to unravel the secrets of God's universe. By extension that also meant man's fate on earth could be controlled and improved. That was the decisive break with the mentality of the Middle Ages when religion, superstition and mysticism reinforced the idea that humanity was a hopeless pawn of Providence, overwhelmed by the incomprehensible workings of the environment. They were dominated by a paralysing anxiety about human inadequacy and ignorance, and by the concept of original sin.

The Renaissance on the other hand bred a sense of liberation, curiosity and a growing awareness of human potential.⁴ Speculation, initiative, experiment and exploration would surely be rewarded with success. Fears and inhibitions that had prevented new ideas flourishing before were conquered. New ideas and new forms were acceptable and challenging in a way they would not have been without mankind's re-evaluation of itself. As cities grew and foreign trade developed, rich and powerful patrons and technical progress combined to overcome the despondency surrounding the Church and its teaching, the spiritual malaise that surrounded so much of Christianity and its fossilised clerical attitudes.

It was no accident that the roots of the Renaissance and the Reformation were in the realm of ideas. The New Learning of the 15th century had three novel features: the cultivation of long-neglected classical authors (especially those such as Cicero and Homer who had been ignored by medieval scholars), the cultivation of ancient Greek as an equal partner to Latin, and the rise of Biblical scholarship based on critical study of original Greek and Hebrew texts that provided the link between the secular Renaissance and the religious Reformation which put special emphasis on scripture. Scholarly criticism of classical texts pre-dated the art of printing but the presses speeded it up. Where Petrarch led, Boccaccio and others followed.

Where the Turk invaded, waves of Greek refugees carrying manuscripts moved west before them. The Hellenist Pico della Mirandola explored the Cabala, Marsilio Ficino the work of Hermes Trismegistus and Johann Reuchlin, Hebrew.⁵ Humanist groups grew up from

Oxford to Salamanca, Krakow to Rotterdam; all paid homage to Erasmus, the 'centre of the scientific study of Divinity' who did more than anyone to marry humanism with the traditions of the Church.⁶

The New World would require the New Man. Education played a key role. Whilst keeping the bedrock of Christian instruction, gymnastics were now taught alongside Latin and Greek. Literature in the vernacular quickly became national literature and a key component of national identity. More people were reading, knowledge was increasing. The upper classes, the rulers, and merchants, were beginning to be better educated. The printing presses were working, the numbers of printers multiplying fast, libraries though small in number were adding to the number and range of their books. Printing made study possible in a way manuscripts did not; texts could be more easily acquired and compared, critical texts prepared. The Renaissance was new information.

Europe might be taking shape, reform in the air, scientific discovery, mathematics, overseas exploration, a sense of freedom, liberation, curiosity, newness, rebirth; yet still the old world lived on. Europe wanted reform. It had not been expecting revolution.⁷ Reform had been tried and failed before. Troubled times produced prophetic literature, tales of wondrous signs and monstrous births kept the new presses rolling and became money-spinners. In 1502 *Apocalypsis Nova*, a 'New Account of the Last Days', was a publishing sensation.⁸ The book predicted that Spiritual Men would herald an Angelic Pastor.⁹

The gospel according to Luther: liberation theology

Luther was not a modern man. He was a late-medieval Catholic.¹⁰ He offered new answers to old questions. He did not ask new questions. Luther claimed to have discovered the Gospels. Stirred into a mix with his university lectures and criticism of Church practice, the question arises what was the essence of the Gospel according to Luther? Was he simply an innocent victim of bad theology? Taught by Nominalists who threatened the scholasticism of Aquinas, he would have been exposed to sermons about sin and repentance, salvation by contrition alone, by God's grace, it was not something that could be bought with a virtuous life. With Luther, the Ten Commandments took over from the seven deadly sins as the new moral gold standard.¹¹ The sacraments shifted from something God did for humanity to something humanity did for God. Whether Luther nailed or posted his 95 theses on 31 October 1517 – he went public. The rest is history.

On the eve of All Saints', the unthinkable had happened as the Church turned on itself. Revolution was in the air. Luther's manifestos became virtual declarations of war on the established Church. It is not possible to understand the period of history covered by the lifetime of Bruegel without understanding the upheavals that then occurred in Latin Christianity. Ideas mattered and the most incendiary ones were in the Bible, a potentially explosive and unpredictable force in every age. Through the new power of the printed word those ideas spread fast.¹² In the hierarchical world at the end of the Middle Ages, the ruling classes believed that the people, the unthinking masses, would believe anything. The vast majority of people and virtually all women, were illiterate, unable to read for themselves even the simple pamphlets – grievance literature of a high order, targeted specifically at them, that were beginning to appear in their thousands. Despite the interest of the Princes of the Holy Roman Empire in taking up the torch of reform for their own financial and territorial reasons, the Reformation became a popular movement on a massive scale, whose methods became direct action, their deeply ingrained conservative nature determined on change. By 1520 religion had become a shopping list of complaints and demands alongside material concerns of insurgent peasants, and came to legitimise dysfunctional communal revolt.

The Diet of Worms in April 1521 irrevocably changed the history of Europe.¹³ Erasmus

had attacked corruption in the Church but not its doctrinal basis.¹⁴ With publication of his three books the previous year Luther had lost significant support by doing just that.¹⁵ Interrogated by Johann Eck, Luther was asked two simple questions. Are these your books? Do you recant? Luther spelled out that if he could be shown, by the use of scripture, to have spoken against scripture, then and only then would he recant. "If then, I revoke these books, all I shall achieve is to add strength to tyranny, and open not the windows but the doors to this monstrous godlessness, for a wider and freer range than it has ever dared before." Luther was disputing what everyone was obliged to believe without question. The Middle Ages had spoken. "Here I stand; I can do no other." The Reformation had replied.¹⁶ It was set to become a motto for all Protestants and, ultimately perhaps, western civilisation.

As the dispute with the Commission had been behind closed doors Luther had been denied a public relations coup. But *inside* those doors were a large number of people from nobility to merchants. They had all been profoundly affected by it, from the next Duke of Schleswig-Holstein and future King of Denmark to the businessmen attending what for them was a commercial networking opportunity. That network took Luther's message away with them, out into the Empire. The Diet of Worms had become a mission event, something the organisers had thought it had made impossible. The impact was far more profound than anyone could have anticipated.

Religious protest as political revolt

The question had become resistance or obedience and it was a question that was to haunt the remainder of the 16th century. What Luther had done was resist the two great powers of medieval Europe: the Pope and the Emperor. He had asserted "that it is better to obey God than man".¹⁷ This was to be Luther's destiny.¹⁸ Believing devoutly that God exercised control over all events on earth, he looked to current affairs to read God's message. Not only had Luther seen in the Pope an Anti-Christ but also the Turkish advance threatened Christianity's very existence. This, he concluded, must be the end, the Last Days were approaching. Many people agreed with him; he was identified with Elijah and seen by some as the prophet of the Last Days. The end was expected soon. A conjunction of the planets in Pisces at the start of 1524 suggested a terrible deluge was on the way. This had been anticipated for years. Hailstorms in July, religious turmoil and fear of the end of the world boiled over. Religious protest became political revolt.¹⁹

Worms was the highpoint of Luther's career, those with Christian faith became polarised. His great success had been to establish a basic principle about western Christianity in its Protestant form: justification by faith alone. It meant that God gave us the gift of faith and



129 Lucas Cranach the Elder *Portrait of Martin Luther* diptych, mixed media on red beechwood 37.5x23.5cm 1529 Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum

that this was the only route to salvation. This was liberating. People were alone in facing their fate, God. This was the distinctive product of the Reformation and is at the centre of the achievements of western civilisation of the last 500 years. 1527 was yet another 9/11 moment. Rome was sacked, utterly and totally, by mutinous troops of the Holy Roman Empire. The world would not be the same again. The Pope's humiliation was seen by some as a direct message from God to the Church that it had to reform itself following the chaos in northern Europe. By the 1530s even the Pope knew the Church was in crisis.²⁰

Miracles and censorship

Counter-Reformation devotion as it became known had begun before the Reformation. The Mass and the breviary were pruned, devotions became more personal than liturgical, the laity encouraged to take communion more frequently and hence go to confession more often, the use of the Bible (in authorised translations of the Vulgate) for devotional purposes approved. Within a generation the devotion of the Angelus, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament for veneration and the cult of Marianism would be widespread.²¹ Yet the physical 'miracle' associated with sanctity was as valued as in the Middle Ages: the relic that cured, the nun suspended in the air, the signs of the stigmata, the face that shone with an unearthly light, a nun's ring of flesh, prolonged fasting, incorruptible bodies that gave off fragrant smells, they were all valued uncritically by people. Church ornamentation became more lavish, the furnishing, altars and sepulchres more costly, elaborate tabernacles on the high altar took the place of a cupboard in the sacristy in which the sacrament was reserved, coloured lamps and precious candlesticks stood out.

It was certainly the Counter-Reformation that began the reactive watershed of the Roman Inquisition, the Index of Prohibited Books, the mission to recover Christendom for the Church in Germany, that sent troops into the Netherlands, the Spanish Armada, the suppression of the Reformation in Bohemia, Silesia and the Palatinate, as political Catholicism became aggressive with renewed self-confidence – as well as the commissions of Titian and Rubens, Palestrina and Lassus, the sainthood of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, and grandeur.

Scholarship suffered with control of the printing presses. Cautious conservatives could not cope with original minds. Censorship was used to defend orthodoxy by Catholics and Protestants alike, the piles of books that repressive machinery held back reached a long way to the heavens. This new oppression was the first bewildered casualty of a scientific age. The standards of editing were very low, censors were often ill-educated, inefficient, uncertain and unworthy to examine the books piled high on their desks and therefore likely to procrastinate and delay. The more conservative Protestants continued to use medieval books of devotion and even those of the Counter-Reformation, just as Catholics were ready to make use of Lutheran hymns. Yet Christendom continued to believe that a state could not survive or prosper if more than one religion was permitted. Half the Church chose the modern Church as the key to understanding the Bible; the other half chose the Bible as the judge of the modern Church. One focused on the altar, the other on the pulpit. Christendom was divided, there was to be no unity. The word Reformation was enshrined in the high endeavours of medieval sanctity, gazing back to a golden simpler age. It was to lose its halo of idealism within the lifetime of Bruegel as it became associated with zealotry, destruction and discontent. A world reformed and ruined for some. Christendom was entering a new age with other interests and aspirations. It had started to move on.

At the crossroads of medieval mystery and Renaissance humanism

THE APOCALYPSE is a vision of the meaning of history. Apocalyptic writing is revelation, it is prophesy. It encapsulated 1000 years of thought before 1AD about the purpose of history. With the coming of the prophets there was a notion that there was some significance to world events and that a force was driving history. The golden time was in the Garden of Eden, then the times were bad and the belief was that it would get so bad, that a new world would in some way break through. A linear concept of time arrived at the same point as the concept of a vengeful God who would arrive and smash the evil enemy. This was a trend in Jewish theology, the fringe philosophy of vengeance and the end of time that is in the Book of Revelation.²² Because it is in the Bible it gained great authority and has run as a strand throughout western history ever since.²³ Apocalyptic visions and narratives had their precursors in prophetic eschatology, that began around the time of the Exile to Babylon, ensured the Jews that God would smash down mountains, beat a path of return, rain down blood-curdling, spine-chilling tortures and destruction on their enemies in order to give reassurance, sustenance and faith to a dispossessed people in exile. It was the literature of salvation and the religion of comfort.

The problem for the prophets was that history did not chime with their prophesies, it never turned out as badly as they had said it would after which apocalyptic visions removed God's saving acts from history into the realm of symbolic archetypes. It became a cosmic vision where the saviours were angelic warriors; the enemies demonic hosts and graphic types all larger than life.

Humanity has always asked the question: what will happen? Apocalyptic religious literature tried to answer that question. At a time of persecution, a time when for many, everything they held to be sacred was being destroyed by people many regarded as anti-Christian or Satanic, there was an even greater search for meaning. The Book of Revelation gave meaning to that kind of experience. It works with the Bible story as a whole, from the Creation to the Last Judgement; was composed to be read, not preached from; was for individual encounter not to exhort people to do things. Because the reader is located in the story, for those that believed it, it gave them meaning.



130 Jheronimus Bosch *St John on Patmos* Berlin, Staatlichen Museen

The impact of the book, which has made it such valuable source material for artists and scholars, is that it is a good read; a speculative, lurid, alternative parallel-world fantasy – sensational early ‘pulp fiction’. It is incredible, fantastic literature, full of emblems, allegories, powerful descriptions, dragons, monsters from the deep, struggles between the good and the damned, riders of the apocalypse and trumpets sounding, a gripping and compelling narrative. It gives a very powerful, cryptic narrative of the history of the world and its destination. For those that believed it, and believed it was sacred, it was ‘un-put-down-able’. It had everything, hence the reader could find in it what they wanted.

Part of its enduring appeal is that is impenetrable; the idea that it contains secret knowledge called forth everybody’s fantasies, particularly in the late Middle Ages.²⁴ It changed the rules.²⁵ The Reformation saw the conversion of Constantine as the beginning of the Anti-christ and calculated the Last Days from that date. A thousand years earlier St Augustine had already tried to eliminate any idea of calculating a date although he did hint that the formation of the Church was the beginning of the Millennium.²⁶

The number of the ‘Beast’²⁷

Cataclysmic events, shattering the cultural certainties of the time akin to planes flying into the twin towers, makes it almost impossible for us to understand how dangerous a moment this was. It convinced contemporaries that they were living right on the edge of prophecy – they were utterly convinced that they were living at the end of time. Fear drove people to an encounter with Revelation, in an attempt to match up stories, plots, narratives and symbols in the Book with what was going on in the world. People who believed in Apocalypse identified with the characters in the Book.²⁸ Persecuted Protestants saw themselves as the just; the ones who would see the power and the glory, their enemies would be the ones struck down by the returning Christ, feelings that arose out of persecution and thrived on persecution. Any time is susceptible to being seen through the mirror of the Apocalypse but the times of Bosch and Bruegel were particularly so.

There was a sense that if God had allowed terrible things to happen, He had to be telling the world something. This made militant sectarian sects believe that if they did not act, then they would suffer and be damned. These people were not mad. This was mainstream Protestant culture. Scripture for them all was a handbook, not just about how the world worked but also about the future. Mystical mathematics, mysterious numbers that held the key to a timetable for the end of the world were thought to be at the heart of Revelation. Study of the Book became a science as intellectuals attempted to explore its meaning, rigorously matching symbols to history; logarithms were not invented to help children do their mathematics but for John Napier, a fanatical Protestant, to calculate the number of the ‘Beast’ and later the date of the Apocalypse with absolute accuracy.²⁹ Failure of the end of the world to materialise in line with a specific prophecy did not discourage people; they simply assumed that their calculation of the mathematics was wrong.³⁰ This was taken so seriously because it was believed to be the literal truth, even the allegorical writing with its incredible drama of the theatre of war, its language of prophecy was considered amenable to rational analysis.³¹

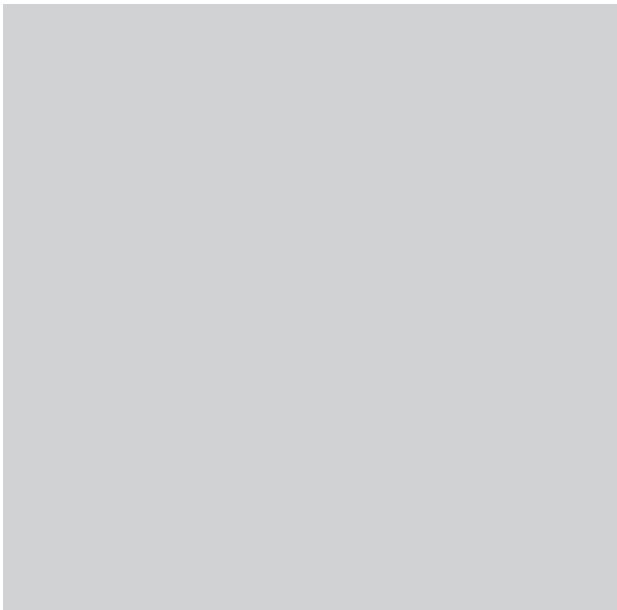
Magic – an optimistic message for a pessimistic age

Magic was one of the great passions of the age. It was a source of wisdom and power, not arcane esoteric and removed from mainstream thought as it is today. In the world of Bosch and Bruegel, religion, science and magic all jostled for position in creative tension with one another in an age that loved secrets and penetrating their meaning. The promotion of magic in the 15th century was due to three things: the discovery of the works of Hermes Trismegistus, the 900 propositions of Pico della Mirandola that brought the Cabala into the reckoning and the rise

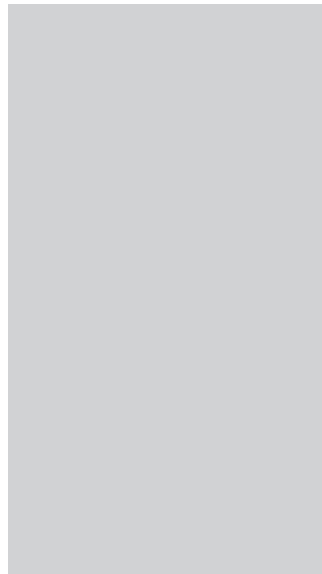
of neo-Platonism with the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the authority of Plato. All three delivered authority from the past, something the age was obsessed by. Add to that mix Biblical scriptures, the Renaissance desire to uncover something of the present in them, and the stage was set for Marsilio Ficino, a kind of text scout for the Medici's, who in 1461 was told to stop working on Plato and begin to unravel Trismegistus.³²

Trismegistus saw the universe as one.³³ He regarded what went on in the heavens to be reflected on the earth and within the soul of man. This was both a new way of looking at things and an example of the old world yielding knowledge and understanding of the present. What was surprising, less acceptable, un-Christian and more Egyptian were instructions for calling on the spirits to animate statues and to make living gods through magical manipulation of the cosmos. Trismegistus was seen to be a magus, both as magician and someone who understood the workings of the heavens and the science of the cosmos. It was just like the magi of the Christmas story being invested with a great deal of authority. By following a star to the birthplace of Christ they brought the Caldeans and Middle Eastern culture into Christianity with the power to nominate the King.³⁴

Magic fed into science.³⁵ It legitimised the focus on nature. No longer was it something profane to be escaped from, but accepted the importance of observation – “as above so below” was the phrase that embraced the entire system of traditional magic inscribed by Trismegistus, and believed to hold the key to all mysteries.³⁶ ‘As above so below’ philosophers did not see themselves as challenging biblical orthodoxy. The world itself was a part of creation, thus to study its secrets was a way to help understand the Bible: science was therefore a route to understanding the hidden meanings in religious texts, hence alchemy was religious enquiry.³⁷ Many of these people really believed that they had been chosen by God to reveal the ultimate secrets of nature. Their language, which today sounds fantastical, cryptic, encoded, symbolic and secretive, is one reason why some commentators have been seduced into seeing it as the key to Bosch.³⁸



131 Sienna Cathedral floor mosaic of Hermes Trismegistus c1481



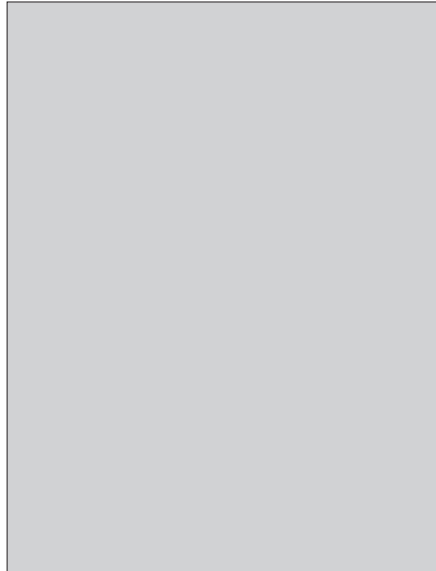
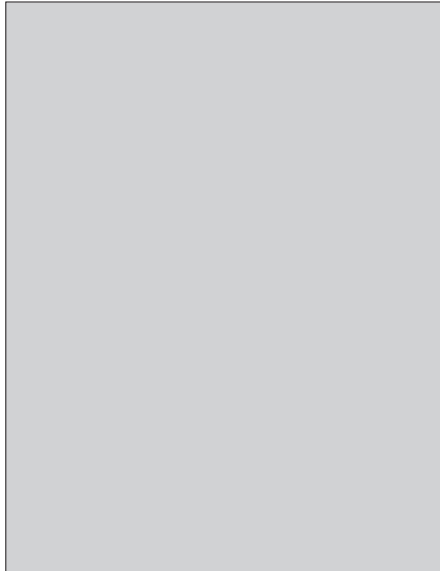
132, 133 *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* 1543
(On the fabric of the human body in seven books)
a textbook of human anatomy by Andreas Vesalius based
on his lectures delivered in Padua

A world of science and revelation

The religious and political upheavals of Europe set in train by Martin Luther began a chain reaction that blew across the continent. A scientific revolution was not far behind, marked by the publication of three books in 1543: the anatomical drawings of Andreas Vesalius, the first translation of the Greek mathematics and physics of Archimedes, and *The Revolution of the Heavenly Orbs* by Copernicus which put the sun at the centre of the heavens.³⁹ Man's understanding of the world in which he lived was being challenged as much as his beliefs. It was a strange kind of revolution; no one talked about it at the time. When Andreas Wessels or Weasels or in the more dignified Latin, Vesalius, first became interested in dissecting bodies in the early 1530s, he had to procure his specimens by creeping out at night and filching half-rotten corpses of criminals from gibbets.⁴⁰ Less than ten years later he had become so celebrated that the civic authorities of Padua where he was professor of anatomy timed executions to coincide with lectures to ensure that he would never lack fresh cadavers to cut up. The message of Vesalius was do not rely on authority, find out for yourself. He was discovering the human body. Just as Copernicus changed forever ideas about man's place in the cosmos, so Vesalius changed forever the approach to human anatomy. Just as the sailors had set sail to discover new worlds, one should learn by doing.

A world without science

Humanist thought, reformation theology, scientific discovery and overseas exploration tend to obscure the fact that magic competed with religion; this was still an era of astrology, miracles, conjuring, witchcraft, necromancy, ghosts, folk cures, omens and fairies. Religious belief continued to be surrounded by irrationality and superstition. Masses were said on every possible occasion. Every organisation from guilds to chivalric orders had patron saints. Pilgrimages were part of life, relics were venerated, belief in the supernatural was more and more enforced as an elaborate hierarchy was established of good and bad angels and universal fear of the Devil.⁴¹ Lucifer was real. The fallen archangel who had once sat beside Gabriel in the highest Heaven, the



134 *The Revolution of the Heavenly Orbs* title page, third edition published 1617 in Amsterdam and (135) manuscript of heliocentric model of the solar system

realm of pure fire where God and the angels resided, was now on the earth, the commander of the forces of darkness. The horrors of Hell were always waiting. The Protestant movement wanted to take the magic out of religion. Even where Protestantism triumphed,⁴² and however much they said it, Europe was still devoted to every form of magical belief for a further 300 years.⁴³

Alchemists, astrologers, diviners, conjurers, healers and witches filled the landscape throughout the lifetimes of Bosch and Bruegel. The countryside was supposedly full of ghosts, fairies, hobgoblins and elves. Magic and religion were still inseparable throughout the Reformation. Every possible supernatural idea was attacked. Calvin dismissed transubstantiation as 'conjury', a conjuring trick. Protestants abhorred oaths, miracles, consecrations, symbols, images, holy water, saints' days and pilgrimages; 'Popery' was black magic, the Pope therefore a wizard and the Mass inevitably a branch of devil worship. They wanted magic-free religion.

Magic was never eliminated completely, nor its interdependence with religion wiped out, despite the Protestant onslaught. The rise of rationalism, the development of science, modern medicine and a seemingly less threatening world in the next century finally had an impact – but it never went away. The sign of the cross, baptisms, oaths in court and the consecration of church buildings, battle standards, food, ships and burial grounds all remained.

New theological and intellectual fashions included a re-appropriation of Aquinas among the Dominicans and a revival of interest in St Augustine and St Paul.⁴⁴ There was a new devotion to St Anne the mother of the Virgin Mary, the Virgin herself had never been so popular and Mary Magdalene was rediscovered as a fusion of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and the prostitute who washed the feet of Jesus. Mysticism was always a source of renewal in the 14th century. Some of the writings were identified as the spiritual equivalent of cookbooks. Luther was later suspicious of speculative mysticism as a shortcut and man-made ladder to Heaven. However, a modified adapted method of mystical devotion had a profound impact on 16th century education.



136 Jheronimus Bosch *The Conjuror* St Germain-en-Laye, Musée Municipal

Witchcraft

Witchcraft developed in parallel with mysticism. A hangover from Pagan times, witchcraft permeated the whole of Medieval society, from the elites to the lowest classes. Belief in satanic possession, black sorcery, and white magic were part of life.⁴⁵ Conventional chronology would expect demonic witchcraft to be part of the Dark Ages, but it was firmly rooted in the early modern era. The Reformation was the age of the witch craze, with Protestants specialising in the detection and burning of witches, whereas denunciations, prosecutions and atrocities largely occurred in Catholic territory. They were both equally zealous.⁴⁶ Once killed, medical experts were called to check for the Devil's mark on the corpses, something they signally failed to find.

As the magic of Catholicism waned so something had to fill the void. For many of those demanding explanations this lead inexorably to the supernatural. At a time of crisis in thinking and belief, witchcraft filled the space left vacant by the ecclesiastical magic of the Church. There was not only a crisis of belief in the 16th century there was a crisis in thinking. It lasted for 300 years.⁴⁷ By actively campaigning against witchcraft the Church itself fostered much of the hysteria surrounding witchcraft at the end of the medieval period. Once the Church gave credence to such things, large sums of money could be made by people undertaking to ruin someone's crops or cause an enemy's child to miscarry.⁴⁸

Practices that had been tolerated for centuries suddenly appeared as a threat. Innocent VIII launched the Church's offensive in 1484 with the Bull *Summis Desiderantes*. The handbook for witch hunters was published two years later, *Malleus Maleficarum*, the hammer of the witches. Heinrich Kramer, a Dominican priest, wrote it and it soon outsold every book in Europe except the Bible. It was frightening – "Magicians, who are commonly called witches are thus termed on account of the magnitude of their evil deeds. These are they who by the permission of God and by the terrible power of evil spells, without any actual draught or poison, kill human beings." From the period of the Reformation onwards it has been estimated that over 100,000 men and women went to their deaths in Western Europe convicted of witchcraft, as many as may have died in the Peasants' Revolt.

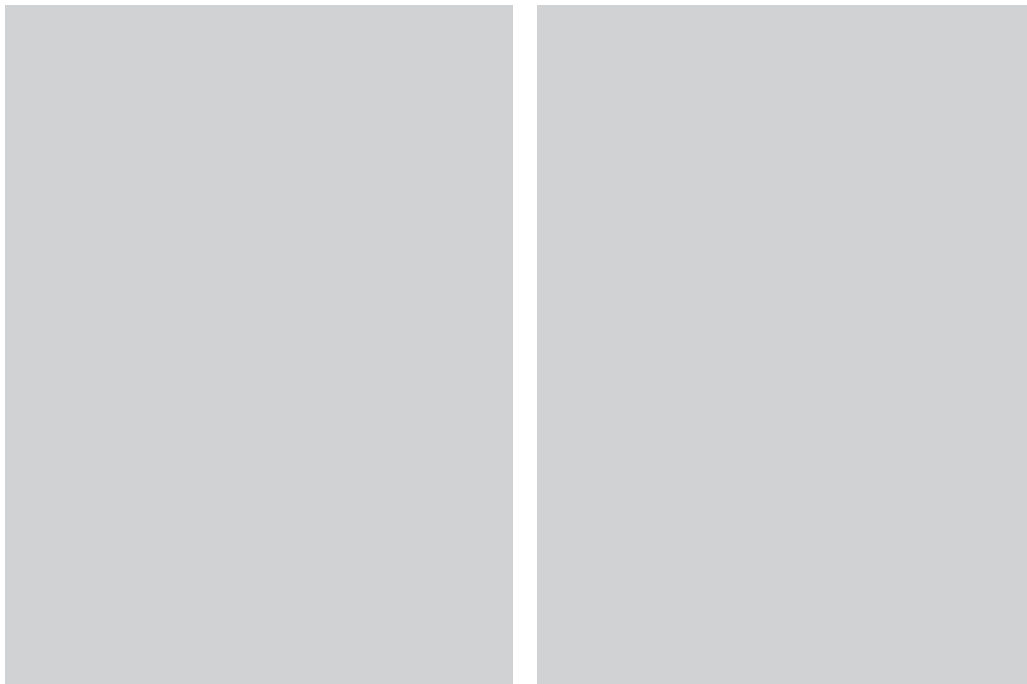
Now that everyone knew witches were in league with the Devil, there was to be no restraint. Belief in witchcraft did not depend a great deal on learned doctrine. "Wizards thou shalt not suffer to live"⁴⁹ – thus belief in witchcraft was buried deep in village communities that feared and suspected 'the other'. So the persecution and the atrocities began. People took matters into their own hands, throwing suspects into a pond. If the person drowned they were innocent, if they floated they were guilty. The black arts of witchcraft were written up, the mechanics of night-flight on broomsticks hypothesised, the menu for a cauldron discussed and the details of orgies conducted on witches' Sabbaths considered, yet the only evidence of diabolic banquets were the distressed confessions of tortured people.

Women were considered weak, unable to resist temptation, their uncontrolled sexual desires a root cause of the problem. These evil women were believed to anoint themselves with grease from the flesh of unbaptised children, ride stark naked on the backs of rams or broomsticks, cast spells and copulate with demons. Everyone was at risk of being accused, but older, single, poor women were particularly vulnerable as their usefulness to the community was seen to be coming to an end.⁵⁰

The idea of Christian deviance was not new. The concept of the demonic potentially entering human beings and forming pacts with the Devil had always been there. As the Church was riven in two and people sought a reason for what many saw as something truly terrifying, the idea of the Devil being released into the world was one possible explanation. Satan had been named as a cause of destruction within the Church before the Reformation. Radical Protestants argued that the Devil had been 'quiet' before the Reformation. He had been idle, and by

exposing the Pope as Anti-Christ, he had been reactivated and was furiously charging through the world trying to corrupt ordinary Christians and lead them to damnation. People were absolutely convinced that the Devil might at any time appear before them and tempt them.⁵¹ The collective hysteria surrounding witchcraft came from the Dark Ages directly into the era of humanism, science and the modern world, just one element of paganism that survived into the Renaissance.

The witch craze presents us with a conundrum. How can the great fear of witches sweeping across Europe be explained just at the moment when the continent trembled on the brink of modernity? How could intelligent and educated men, who seem in so many ways similar to ourselves, have believed such pernicious nonsense? This extraordinary phenomenon was not, as one might imagine, a lingering ancient superstition, but an explosive new force that legitimised murderous persecution and judicial torture. Inextricably bound up with the idea of heresy, to disbelieve in witchcraft itself became heresy, punishable by death. This was an inversion of the Christian orthodoxy of the Dark Ages which held that belief in witches was pagan and a mark of the infidel. Disgust at the cruelty of the religious zealots towards their victims, their prurient fantasies, and their appetite for blood seems to spring from their sanctimony and sadism not being far apart. A last manifestation of ignorance and superstition, even the most profound philosophers of the early modern period subscribed to belief in witches. Crude demonology proclaimed by the churches flourished during the intellectual wars of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Two incompatible sets of belief drew on their hideous reservoirs of hatred, refuelled by the old dualism of God and the Devil. How a new, apparently rational society, could be convulsed by primitive superstition and fear, feasting on the persecution of social nonconformity in the shape of the witch as scapegoat is difficult to comprehend. It may appear nonsense to us, but sincere as they were in their beliefs, from this distance must be treated with due regard for the times. Scholarship by anthropologists about witch-beliefs in other societies at other times paraded by way of explanation shed no light on Europe in the 16th century.



137 *Malleus Maleficarum* Glasgow Incunabula Project. Binding and (138) title page with manuscript additions Metz c1508 By permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections

The Enemy Within

Poner una pica en Flandres Anonymous

CHARLES V sought hegemony in Europe. He inherited his mother's dream to conquer Christendom and to use his authority to defend it against infidel Muslims and the Protestant Reformation. For Charles, the Imperial idea had its roots in the *Reconquista*. He lacked nothing. He had troops, good generals and loyal followers, incomparable diplomatists, mastery of the sea and the support of bankers like the Fuggers. As if that was not enough, he had America. Spain had become the warehouse of Europe. Spain's part in resisting the Ottoman expansion was at first reluctant. The rebellion in the Netherlands resulted in a serious diversion of its military strength in northwest Europe. And so Spain went from grandeur to decline in a century.

"For a few fabulous decades Spain was to be the greatest power on earth" and "all but the master of Europe."⁵² With Charles V-Carlos I at the helm the country had maintained the finest army in Europe with gold and silver from the Americas. Under Philip II the country was at the pinnacle of its political power whilst being undermined by resistance at home, revolt in the Netherlands and French hostility. To hold together such a vast empire as Philip II inherited, so many nations and people, required a common factor. Inevitably, Philip found this in religion. As Defender of the Faith he set out to establish domination. As an absolute monarch he became the example of a new system of rule, to be copied by other European monarchs that only ended with the French Revolution. As this hegemony ran counter to the spirit of the Reformation, war was inevitable.

Through it all this austere, penitential, workaholic 'monarch who ruled without leaving his desk' in the Escorial, tried to enforce spiritual and administrative uniformity which the variety of his dominions would not permit. 'One monarch, one empire, one sword' was relentlessly pursued by the king who *trabajar para el pueblo*, 'worked for his people'.⁵³ Considered by William I of Orange-Nassau (1533-1584) 'a murderer and a liar', like Don Quixote he tilted at windmills.

Spain suffered for its splendour.⁵⁴ The richest coffers in the world were emptied to fight the opposition that Philip saw everywhere: the Moriscos of Granada, the Aragonese, the French Huguenots, Dutch Protestants, he sought to decimate the Church's enemies across Europe. The Inquisition established in Spain in 1478, combined religion with power politics, and when it began work in 1481 surpassed all Inquisitorial activity that had preceded it in terms of reach and length.⁵⁵

It became one of the most barbaric periods of European history. Jews, then Muslims and Protestants were put through the Inquisitional Court and condemned to torture, imprisonment, exile and death. In 1522 Spain brought the Inquisition to the Netherlands. In the next 13 years, 1300 people were executed for their beliefs. At the time, the Burgundian Circle created in 1512 primarily for the purpose of organizing defence and the collection of tax, was a mosaic of local privileges and of social and cultural divisions. The feudal aristocracy of the countryside contrasted sharply with the wealthy burghers of the towns and cities and the fishing communities. Over 200 towns and cities controlled 50 per cent of European trade and were responsible for paying seven times more in taxes to Spain than it received in bullion from its overseas possessions.⁵⁶

Spain was the most devout and powerful of the Catholic states; yet the Netherlands were open to Protestant influence of every kind in every direction. To the east, the German states were Lutheran or Reformed; to the west after 1558, England was both Protestant and always a potential enemy of Spain; to the south, after 1562, the Huguenots were fighting the Guises and

the Catholic League. The citizens of the Netherlands were prosperous, their cities mercantile, their ports wealthy, their education advanced and their people the kind among whom new reforming ideas spread rapidly.

"The Spanish crown, the most centralised monarchy in Europe, determined by reasons of devotion and of state to suppress heresy by fire and sword, met the only part of its empire where Protestants were numerous enough to constitute a political force."⁵⁷ Thus two parties, one state: one Catholic eager to retain and extend its power of the crown over local liberties; the other, Protestant led but including Catholic noblemen, resenting any extension of royal power, determined to preserve local traditional liberties, wanting toleration for its faith and now too numerous to suppress despite all that the stake and the scaffold had done.

The absentee ruler, Philip II, had wealth and the strongest military machine of the day. He was determined to unite the Netherlands with their languages and traditions as a Spanish state. To this end he created a new system of smaller dioceses and bishoprics to which he retained the nomination, and in 1565 savagely reinforced the already ferocious decrees against heretics. By then, the opposition in the Netherlands was beginning to identify itself with resistance to religious policy of the king and therefore with the Protestants. Economic misery was overtaken by political crisis. Ecclesiastical reform brought discontent to a head.⁵⁸

In 1566 congregations began to worship in the open fields, sometimes under armed guard and with barricaded approaches. A congregation of 7-8000 met near Ghent, 15,000 near Antwerp, and 20,000 at a bridge near Tournai, a third of whom were armed and the preacher escorted to his pulpit by a hundred mounted troops. Protestant communities were created by courage and conviction of a high order.⁵⁹ Francis Junius preached to a meeting in Antwerp while several men were burning in the market place outside and the light from the flames was flickering at the windows of the room.

In circumstances like that, with popular feelings running high, any public event could start a tumult.⁶⁰ In August 1566 during a procession to conduct a colossal statue of the Virgin Mary around the streets of Antwerp, a mob broke into the cathedral, an old woman who sat by the door selling candles was mocked and began to throw things, passions ran high and people began to smash the place up. Statues in churches, pictures on the walls, stained glass, vestments, missals, monasteries, all were smashed, torn, sacked in an orgy of destruction. Some prisoners were freed. Protestant pastors struggled to restrain and suppress the lawlessness. The riots divided the people into warring parties. It was civil war. Philip II of Spain resolved to rule by martial law. On 1 December 1566 a Calvinist synod at Antwerp declared armed resistance permissible.

Bloedraad

Philip sent the Duke of Alva with 60,000 troops and unlimited powers to force 'this rebellious and heretical country' into submission, 'to punish the guilty with unbending severity'.⁶¹ Alva established a Council of Tumults, the *Bloedraad*, usually referred to as the Council of Blood, to try anyone and everyone. Egmont and Hoorn were beheaded in Brussels and their severed heads sent back to Spain in a box. The whole country became a charnel house. Within a few months of Alva's arrival the terror spiralled out of control: Motley describes "the scaffolds, the gallows, the funeral piles, which have been sufficient in ordinary times, furnished now an entirely inadequate machinery for the incessant executions. Columns and stakes in every street, the door posts of private houses, the fences in the fields, were laden with human carcasses, strangled, burned, beheaded. The orchards in the country bore on many a tree the hideous fruit of human bodies". Alva's troops, with their remit on their banner, *Pro lege, rege, grege*, plundered towns and cities and left them drenched in blood.⁶²

Inquisition, occupation and taxation: three strands of oppression. On 16 February 1568, the Holy Office condemned the entire population of the Netherlands to death as heretics. "A

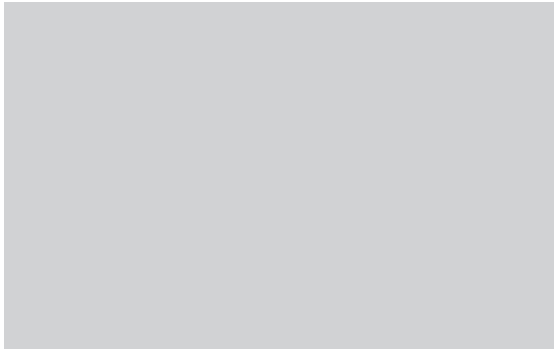
proclamation of the king, dated ten days later, confirmed this decree of the Inquisition and ordered it to be carried out at once, without regard to age, sex or condition, probably the most concise death warrant ever framed” stated Motley. Three million people, men, women and children, were sentenced to death. This, however, seems to have been beyond even Alva.

Spain moved on. The army conquered, the Church integrated the new overseas territories, the army subjected, the Church controlled and, backed by irresistible force, then proceeded as it always had, to deliver an earthly foretaste of Hell via the Inquisition to those who might question its authority. The cardinal statesmen superseded the warrior archbishops, but the Church continued as a force with which to bind the kingdom together. Treason and heresy were now indistinguishable.

Nothing could divert the spirit of intolerance – until the greatest military machine of all was overwhelmed by the spiralling costs of war. Fighting on several fronts at once without any respite Spain could not save itself or its Habsburg partner. The logistics of supporting an army in the Low Countries became insuperable thanks to the problems of ‘the Spanish Road’. *Poner una pica en Flandres*, putting a pikeman into Flanders, became Spanish slang for attempting the impossible.⁶³ “The Habsburg bloc provides one of the greatest examples of strategical overstretch in history.”⁶⁴

War, the mother of all things, *bellum omnium mater*, had given birth to the modern world.⁶⁵ The Europe that the Habsburgs thought to bring obediently to heel was already off the leash, politically and economically. Once Philip II’s interest payments to foreign bankers reached over 40 per cent of state revenues, the game was up. When the Spanish tax base became too narrow to support its war effort, it went bankrupt in 1557; the Habsburg dream collapsed and the world economy began. Antwerp would effortlessly achieve economically what the Emperor failed to do politically: gain control of Europe and those areas of the world dependent on the old continent.

Bruegel had died as his country was in open rebellion against Spain. *Landscape with the Magpie on the Gallows* was painted in the year before he died, a picture that according to Van Mander he left to his wife.⁶⁶ It is a picture of the times. A symbol for gossip, was the magpie triumphant or punished? Was Bruegel feeling threatened? To be alive in a sea of malicious rumour, calumny, casual violence and organised murder, who would not? In *Vexations of Art* Svetlana Alpers asked “What do artists do in wars?.. Why do artists retreat instead of facing up to things?”⁶⁷ and goes on “Experience... was not within the range of his preferred figural type”.⁶⁸ We shall see. He could not invent anything more extraordinary than what was around him.



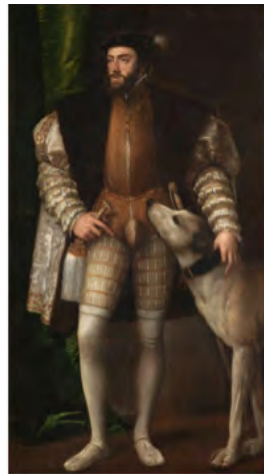
139 *El Escorial* 1563-92: the church 1582; the monastery, royal palace, and college 1584; the library 1592. *Architects* Juan Bautista de Toledo 1563-67, Juan de Herrera from 1570 (with others, including Jacopo Vignola for the church) and with Francisco de Mora from the 1580s.



140 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Sermon of St John the Baptist* Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum



141 Workshop of Titian
Philip II c1554
Florence, Palazzo Pitti



142 Titian 1532-3
Charles V with a Hound
Madrid, Prado



143 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
The Magpie on the Gallows
Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum

Adapt or perish – the message of history

“History is made without knowing of its making” Jean-Paul Sartre⁶⁹

IF THERE WAS an air of immobility about the Middle Ages and an air of unreality about the Renaissance, then there was certainly an air of naivety about the ‘age of reason’ following the Reformation. Renaissance humanists had promised sympathetic concordance between reason and faith. But this consensus had not prevailed against the world of religious dogma, magic and superstition.

“There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy” says Hamlet.⁷⁰ The ability to think for oneself that was the key attainment of the 16th century was supposed to shed ‘the light of reason’ on the darkness of the world.⁷¹ That darkness was symbolised by the Church and the unthinking, irrational, dogmatic attitudes with which it had become shrouded. Rival dogmas set up a clash of ideas with little toleration of rational dialogue on either side. The clash of beliefs, the ferocity of the arguments, the idealism, the bravery and self sacrifice, did not hide the bigotry and intolerance that remained as the world of science, education, politics and philosophy changed, developed and moved on.

The boundless vigour of the Renaissance was failing. Life was still a short interlude before death. People were still obsessed with the afterlife.⁷² The fear and insecurity of the medieval world remained constant. Science was inextricably linked to theology throughout virtually all of this period. There was no separation between physical and spiritual phenomena. The forces of nature, continuous warfare, plague, famine, anarchy and state organised thugs, all added up to a tough time. In a century that wanted to believe, where atheism was not an option, it is very difficult for us to grasp what being exposed to the wrath of God was like in the 15th and 16th centuries. It is dangerous to simplify what is meant to be complex. Dismember a Chinese puzzle or a Rubik Cube and you are left with the pieces, not the puzzle. History is never tidy. It always ends with more questions. Conclusions are much too convenient.

“The Renaissance and the Reformation were both outstanding and long-lived cultural revolutions, coming one after the other” and together. “It was already explosive to have reintroduced Greece and Rome to Christian civilisation. To tear apart the seamless robe of the Church was even more earth shaking. Yet in the end the dust settled, everything was absorbed into the existing order and the wounds healed. The Renaissance ended with Machiavelli’s Prince and the Counter-Reformation. The reformation loosed upon the world a more dominant Europe, supremely capitalist.”⁷³ Revolution in the Netherlands was popular, urban, “a movement that would never have won more than ten per cent of the votes in a democratic election but which by the end of the 16th century had played an indispensable part in the creation of a new player on the European stage”.⁷⁴ Calvinist Protestants had a creed and a cause that transcended national frontiers. Theirs became a story of soldiers, volunteers, mercenaries and financiers.

Reformation became a continuous story.⁷⁵ The 16th and 17th centuries were a time of change, confusion and conflict for individuals and nations. Religious wars continued and were more than a match for the ideological revolutionary wars of subsequent centuries. This was a turning point in European civilisation certainly, because it overshadowed a whole series of major changes in the way man viewed the world and himself in it. It shaped the modern world. If these times teach us anything at all, it is the need to remember the message of history – adapt or perish.

144 Brent Mitchell
Contemplating
Pieter Bruegel the
Elder’s *Harvest* at
the Metropolitan
Museum, New York
2007.

- 1 Simon Schama *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)* 1991 p320
- 2 Patrick Collinson *The Reformation* 2003 p13
- 3 Max Weber (1904-5) *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* originally published as volumes 20 and 21 of *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, translated as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1930 by Parsons, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization* in 1938 by Eisenstadt and *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence and Contexts* in 1993, edited by Lehmann and Roth.
- 4 Kenneth Clark *Civilisation* 1969 p135 disagrees with this, when he writes of Leonardo's gifts, "... all these gifts were dominated by one ruling passion which was not a Renaissance characteristic – curiosity". Clark ends his essay on Leonardo: "To the humanist virtues of intelligence was added the quality of heroic will. For a few years it seemed that there was nothing which the human mind could not master and harmonise."
- 5 To acquire the key to the Old Testament Christian scholars depended on learned Jews. In 1506 Johannes Reuchlin published *De rudimentis Hebraicis*, only to find himself in a fight that had a poisonous brew of theological conservatism and anti-Semitism. For some years the Reuchlin business was much bigger than the Luther affair.
- 6 See Huizinga *Erasmus of Rotterdam: with a selection from his letters* 1952
- 7 Girolamo Savonarola gave that failure drama. Macchiavelli called him an 'unarmed prophet'. (Skinner and Price *Macchiavelli: 'The Prince'* 1988 p21) In the early 1490s he had been preaching about the Last Days, soon accompanied by visions and direct communication with God. Events conspired, however, to catapult Savonarola to star status. The Medicis were losing their grip on power, the French armies invaded, a terrifying, unknown disease broke out (the pox) and the Last Days did indeed seem to be arriving. Savonarola preached radical political and moral reform in the name of God, a message of militant religious radicalism that raised his status even higher as a rigorously regulated republic was proclaimed. In 1497 the high point of the city's carnival was 'a bonfire of the vanities' that included some of the finest Florentine Renaissance art. Continuing misery in the city led the political faction that had ridden to power using Savonarola's charisma to fall and in 1498, deserted by the mob that had worshipped him, he was tortured and burnt at the stake. His cry for reform was medieval, briefly triumphant, then suppressed in the conventional way. Erasmus, whose appeals for reform were half as passionate and twice as effective, thought Savonarola's defiance a sad example of the evils to be found among friars.
- 8 Possibly written by a Portuguese Franciscan, Amadeus Menezes da Silva, the *New Account* built on earlier apocalyptic themed writing. It has been suggested that the book was inspired by Thomas Müntzer, including as it did his prediction of a third age, an expectation of a thousand-year rule by saints on earth before the Last Judgement, a strict definition of 'millenarianism', something with profound political implications that leaders of the Reformation found difficult, if not impossible at times, to control. Müntzer (c1489-1525) a protégé of Luther, musician, writer of hymns, charismatic preacher and deviser of new liturgies, recognised secular rulers as the Last Days were about to happen, encouraged iconoclasm and non-payment of tithes in order to usher in Paradise. Luther used Müntzer's behaviour to draw attention away from himself during the Peasant's War. Engels elevated him into an earlier incarnation of Lenin. In reality he was a mystic and a dreamer.
- 9 The Lateran Council then forbade preaching on apocalyptic subjects. An industry of ideal scenarios emerged. Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) wrote a book about *Utopia*, the Greek for 'nowhere', in 1516. It was an attempt to find the perfect form of government in a utopian vision of a better world not unlike Plato's *Republic* or Bacon's *New Atlantis*. (In an age when there were an abnormally high number of individuals that history would later claim changed the world, historians such as Thomas Carlyle had plenty to choose from, writing it up as a catalogue of famous individuals – "History is the essence of innumerable Biographies". Whilst not a literal believer in the Christian Apocalypse, dramatic imagery of conflagration and destruction infuses the work of Carlyle, serving his need for gripping narrative.)
- 10 The 11th century Gregorian reforms had been instituted to rescue the Church from the corrupting influence of secularisation by insisting on clerical celibacy and an ending of the buying and selling of offices, simony. In 1215 Innocent III had convened the fourth Council that formulated the doctrine of the Eucharist and added the landmark requirement of an annual confession of sins. But by the time of Luther's birth the religious world was once again in the grip of new theological and intellectual fashion. There was a revival of interest in St Augustine and St Paul.
- 11 Collinson *The Reformation* 2003 p10, quoting John Bossy *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* 1985
- 12 Words were at the heart of things because 'the Word was God'. Who or what was a Catholic? Catholic was a word that a lot of people wanted to possess in the 16th century. Was it the whole Christian Church founded 1500 years before, the western Latin half of the Church after the split 500 years before or was it the part of the western half that remained true to Rome after the Reformation? Equally the question can be asked about the word Reformation. What started as a word of abuse was then taken up for use in the Counter-Reformation that later became a Catholic Reformation. Tridentine Catholicism would later also embrace the term. Protestant is a word that came originally from a minority group of princes and cities issuing a 'Protestatio' and voting together for their reformist beliefs on a single occasion when the Holy Roman Empire's Diet, its imperial assembly, met in Speyer in 1529. Then used in the politics of the Holy Roman Empire for many years, it had no wider reference, unlike evangelical, a word widely used and recognised at the time.
- 13 The Diet had a great deal on its agenda. It was to last six months. This was meant to be the culmination of a process to reform of the system of Empire and, as ever, there was the need to raise and fund fighting forces to fight the Turk, inexorably expanding westwards to the heart of Europe. Belgrade was lost in 1521, the Battle of Mohács in 1526 would cost the last independent King of Bohemia and Hungary his life, his possessions reverting to the Habsburgs who thus inherited central Europe. The siege of Vienna was then just three years away. This really was a clash of civilisations. There really was a fear that Christianity might disappear and be overwhelmed by the Ottoman Empire. The Turk was the Devil. And he was banging on the door of Christian Europe. 'War, the threat of war, and the seemingly inexorable Ottoman onslaught made the Council of Trent [over its entire 18 years] a perilous enterprise throughout all of its three periods, including the cease-fires.' John W O'Malley *Trent* 2013 p4
- 14 Within five years Erasmus was writing that the actions of the Protestants had forced him to reaffirm his loyalty to the imperfect structures of the Old Church, "Therefore I will put up with this Church until I see a better one; and it will have to put up with me, until I become better" *Collected Works of Erasmus LXVI Controversies* Charles Trinkaus (ed) 1999 p117
- 15 All three were explosive. The first was *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. Not a nationalistic book, 'German nation' is neither the German speakers of central Europe, nor a call for the nation of Germany that was manufactured in the 19th century. It was the sacred medieval institution of the Holy Roman Empire and its privileged nobility that combined political protest with solid theological thinking in what, by then, had become fairly traditional criticism of the Church. The second was *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which in a deliberate echo of the papacy's 14th century move to Avignon attacked the sacramental system of the Church combined with a radical theological critique fuelled by his loathing of Aristotle. (Sacraments were reduced from seven to three by Luther: baptism, Eucharist and possibly penance. True sacraments consisted of a divine promise marked by a sign, both of which could only be found in scripture.) The third, *The Freedom of a Christian* was more conciliatory, answering objections to his justification that salvation was to be had by faith alone and that, whilst there is an essential place for work, work is not essential for salvation. The word 'freedom' was the most remarkable thing about it.
- 16 The words attributed to him and, almost certainly not spoken but polished by the first editor of his collected works Georg Röser, became the most memorable thing he ever 'said'.

- 17 The Acts of the Apostles 5:29. However, Romans 13:1 had become a defining text of the Reformation: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." What would happen if the lawful authorities did not take the role He expected of them? The rest of the Reformation was to be a battle between these two principles; obey God rather than man, but obey the powers that God has put there.
- 18 Luther spent his ten months in hiding translating the New Testament into High German, (reputedly in just 11 weeks) something that was to shape the language for ever. The Old Testament took him 12 years, working with assistants.
- 19 The so-called Peasants' War, an uprising against their landlords by the *Bauern*, tenant farmers who formed a wealthy elite rural community, responsible, self-reliant families, spiralled out of control. The Reformation had not only injected instability into the established world, it had raised the stakes against authority. Disputes were infused with a new self-righteousness. The fact that many of the landlords were monasteries and churches only fuelled the situation. A small revolt in Bavaria spread across Europe to become the most popular uprising before 1789. By the time of the Peasants' Revolt in 1525, something that began as a little industrial action alongside Carnival was set to become a frightening force: the peasants had artillery and experienced mercenary officers. They were set to become a frightening force. When considering the failures of the revolutions in 1848, Engels thought there were lessons to be learnt from 1525.
- 20 Paul III, father of three, a figure of Renaissance worldliness, responsible for the Villa Farnese and treating Rome to a firework show, was an unlikely reformer. Nevertheless, in 1536 he appointed a Select commission of Cardinals and other prelates 'Concerning the Reform of the Church'. Its report was radical. It gathered dust for a time but led somehow, via serpentine political squabbles, to the Council of Trent, eight years of on-off assemblies that resulted in decrees that would define the Church for the next 400 years. Luther had effectively set the agenda. However, the notion of Trent as a monolithic and single-minded gathering, untroubled by rancour, confidently poised to take the steps necessary to put the Catholic house in order does not withstand historical scrutiny. Its debates were far from placid. More than any previous council, Trent insisted on continuity of doctrine with apostolic times thus helping develop a Catholic mindset reluctant to admit any change in the course of Church history. Its legacy comprised a host of myths and misunderstandings about what it actually enacted such as the supposed prohibition of the use of vernacular in the Mass. Initially reluctant to convoke the Council, the papacy emerged stronger than ever with its authority enhanced. Adopting a siege mentality against Protestantism, the Church ring-fenced itself in terms of doctrine, was universally conservative, reinforced scholasticism, turned bishops into line managers, subalterns to Christ's Vicar on Earth, a papal high command that would take no prisoners (literally) and was anti-Jew, homosexual and, bizarrely, matadors. Pius V (1566-72) prohibited bullfights. By the time of Gregory XIII a pope could order a *Te Deum* to celebrate the massacre of Protestants during the night before the Feast of St Bartholomew.) Spiritual rebirth and enlightenment did not come from Trent. On 13 January 1547 the Council finally declared itself on justification by faith. Canon 9: "If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified... let him be anathema". Due to Luther, Catholicism was now defined in relation to that doctrine.
- 21 Bruegel's realism in *The Death of the Virgin* was notable for its defiance of Catholic belief that the Virgin was assumed bodily into heaven. Christ's mother lies on a conventional deathbed in a pool of light in an otherwise darkened room. A bizarre crowd of people surrounds her. Astonishing in terms of atmosphere, iconography and technique the painting is notable for the sense of illumination that emanates from the Virgin. It is not what we expect from Bruegel.
- 22 The Book of Revelation is not a unique book. There were many Jewish and Greek apocalypses before it, such as those of Peter, Enoch, the 12 patriarchs, etc. It became accepted as part of the canon with great reluctance in 3-4AD on the basis that it was written by John the Divine. When the various sects became unified as the Christian Church after Constantine converted, its Council met in Constantinople to agree on which texts were the work of God. All the books that were thought possible for inclusion were placed under a shroud, the door was shut, those attending prayed to the Holy Spirit to reveal which were the true texts and, when they opened the doors next morning, the real books were on the top of the pile. Perhaps the Church knew that some books were so controversial that it had to come up with a story of divine intervention to justify their inclusion. At the time when Revelation entered the canon, the Church was still a revolutionary body, looking to overthrow the imperial power that was trying to smash it. Once it had become the religion of the Empire it did not wish to condone theology that stipulated it should pass away with the death pangs of the age. As the Church became an institution, there was an attempt to cut out any texts that compromised or threatened its orthodoxy and there was an attempt to define what was the truth. Apocalyptic literature up to this point had regarded Imperial Rome as Anti-Christ. Once Constantine became a Christian Emperor it was more problematic and the Church had an uneasy relationship with the concept of Apocalypse. However, a persecuted Christian from Asia Minor probably wrote it, having become a disgruntled exile living on the island of Patmos and, standard practice for the time, wanting to ensure good publicity for what was sure to be a highly suspicious book, claimed someone famous and important wrote it. The Ethiopian Church still does not accept it.
- 23 DH Lawrence considered the Book of Revelation the "least Christian book in the Bible... that has had more effect than all four gospels". He called people who believed in the Book, 'Patmosers', poured scorn on the idea of mealy-mouthed Christian democrats revelling in self glorification of the weak with a millennium of pseudo humble saints, yet he still saw himself as some sort of Messiah and had a Joachim-like idea of three ages of love, law and comfort.
- 24 When the Bible was first printed, there were minor side comments throughout each page of text. The Book of Revelation, however, had huge explanatory commentaries for every few lines. For those that knew their Old and New Testament well, it connected up all the dots. This fed into a Gnostic desire to penetrate the veil of truth.
- 25 The only basis on which the Orthodox Church would accept it was by forbidding it to be read aloud or for any scene in it to be pictured. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it saw the coming of the Anti-Christ and changed its rules.
- 26 Augustine had been a Manichean, a sect that came from the Zoroastrian tradition believing in absolute good and evil, and, whilst pushing the vision of an imminent apocalypse away, set out the tension between those two forces; in his theology the world was on the side of evil, spiritually incomplete, corrupt and mankind helpless.
- 27 The Beast: 666, with reference to a statement in Revelation 13: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six" this was the number of the Anti-Christ, the Devil's number, which lead to considerable work to identify the person, or it was a number that the Beast would require people to carry a mark on their bodies in order to trade commercially; others thought it a binary code for the human body, the list of possibilities was endless.
- 28 Socially radical friars were some of the loudest in announcing their evidence for the Last Days, noting the 15th century Franciscan Johann Hilten's prophecy that a great reformer would arise in 1516.
- 29 It would be in 1688. These ideas also had attraction for some of the greatest intellects of later ages, Newton believed in it passionately, calculating that 2060 was the end of the world.
- 30 The power of numbers led to a belief in 'sacred time', that there was a beginning, the Creation, which happened for a purpose, history was then directed inexorably towards a better world, fighting for existence the tension that existed between Utopia and the Apocalypse. Schweitzer saw Christ throwing himself against the wheel of time, in order to break its power, whereas the Apocalypse ignored Christ's sacrifice in favour of a vicious, militaristic ruler. George Amoss Jr, Homeward Friends Meeting, December 1991, from the Quaker Electronic Archive - 'Another image, a striking

one, is from Albert Schweitzer's book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Schweitzer said that Jesus threw himself upon the wheel of history in what was really an attempt to bring it to a halt, to bring this world to an end and to usher in the Kingdom of God in its fullness and power; but the wheel turned, and it crushed him. Even now, said Schweitzer, his mangled body hangs on that wheel as it turns, and "this is His victory and His reign".³¹ If the vision of the Gospels was that time was individual, the alternative vision set out in the Apocalypse was that it was communal.

- 31 After discovering the New World in 1501 Columbus wrote a book of prophecy in which he saw the discovery of America as fulfilment of part of the Book of Revelation. A great enigma for medieval scholars had been where were the twelve tribes that would surrender up their 12,000 martyrs that would go into the new world? (Jacob, renamed Israel, had one daughter and 12 sons who fathered 12 tribes. Judah, the ancestors of today's Jews is composed from two of the twelve. The Talmud refers to eventual reunification of all the tribes.) Without the twelve there could be no end of the world and no Second Coming of Christ. Ten tribes had apparently disappeared off the face of the earth when suddenly a new world was discovered, populated by tribes that no one knew about before. They were thought to be the lost tribes of Israel. There was a very strong apocalyptic tradition behind the imposition of the brutalities of the New World as the Counter-Reformation set out on its world mission, beginning in a place of promise, somewhere the sins of the world could be put aside and something totally new created. This was fed by Protestants going there later and laying the foundations for numerous new Jerusalems, to be followed by references in language similar to that used by Donald Rumsfeld, to old, tired, corrupt Europe, seen as the Anti-Christ. If it was not the Anti-christ then it had to be the breeding ground for one, something that led into the notion that America was in some way destined for a great purpose. The opening up of the west was to be driven by the evangelical tradition using the Bible to justify their exploration, giving meaning to their struggle and suffering, to their courage and patience, preparing for the return of Christ. Environmental movements today try to shock us into doing things with visions of the world in flames, all the language derived from the Apocalypse, only countered by the utopian belief of a return to a world of primitive harmony.
- 32 Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) was the first great translator of Plato, whom he saw as a pagan philosopher very much in tune with Christian truths. He translated Trismegistus, believing him to be five steps from Plato and the head of a pious philosophical tradition, giving him an amazing authority via his genealogy that not only included Orpheus and Pythagoras but was also, according to St Augustine, linked to Moses. A floor mosaic in the cathedral in Siena describes him as a contemporary of Moses; the author of Genesis and, in Ficino's eyes therefore, a pagan equivalent. To Ficino this new find validated his own studies of philosophy. Through Trismegistus he saw the potential union of the entire Greek tradition of rational and speculative philosophy plus, through the link with Moses, it could also be seen as a single source from which the Judeo-Christian and Greek philosophical tradition sprang. To Ficino this meant that it was perfectly acceptable to study rational philosophy and to pursue the ideas that sprang from the later Platonic tradition while still holding profoundly religious views with regards man's place in the universe. Ficino was not only a translator and philosopher. He was also a magi and an astrologer, and is best known for his *Three Books on Life*, about holistic health. Natural magic was used in medicine as people looked for powers in herbs and stones. In these books Ficino gave medical advice for scholars through the use of natural philosophy and celestial magic. Considered mainstream at the time, Ficino's holistic astrological medicine highlights the difference between the Renaissance view and that of modern scientists and astrologers, for whom the connection between the heavens and earth is psychological and symbolic. If any connection is recognized, it is usually explained as the result of matter or energy, quantifiable material forces. Typical of the age, for all his intelligence Ficino was a showman and promoter, chiefly of himself. He is like Prospero in *The Tempest*, one who controls nature through the unsanctioned power of magic and manipulation of the credulous.
- 33 The ideas of Trismegistus promised secret knowledge to the initiated, his claims to have spoken to the spirits and turned base metal into gold propelled natural magic into the mainstream of Renaissance

intellectual thought as scholars and magicians alike vied to understand the secrets that might bring statues to life and call angels down from Heaven. The fact that he was probably not the man he was supposed to be but a collective author writing several hundred years later was unknown at the time and would have been irrelevant. Concepts of authenticity and fraud were far more slippery in the Renaissance. If a text was seen as ancient it was considered worth studying in its own right. It did not matter how ancient.

- 34 Wise men to the Greeks were *Philosophers*; among Egyptians they were *Priests*; to Hebrews they were *Prophets*, *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; amongst the Babylonians they were known as *Caldeans*. Persians called them *Magicians*.
- 35 Magic was halfway between religion and science. Religion was concerned with the spiritual realm beyond the visible, science accepted that existence for all practical and philosophical purposes and attempted to discover how it worked. Magic attempted to use invisible forces to change the visible world. It was not far from scientific thought, the two were inter-related, promising secret knowledge for the initiated, only science left less scope for imagination to believe it could remake the world. Magic was fantasy but it nevertheless enchanted artists whose work enchants us.
- 36 The phrase appeared in *The Emerald Tablets*, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus and written in Egypt around 500BC. It was the first text translated into Latin when alchemy arrived in Western Europe in the 12th century. It aroused great interest because it was included in a short piece of 13 lines called the "secret of secrets". Trismegistus gave the provenance of the phrase to Aristotle, which was enough to ensure its success.
- 37 Alchemists (or experimental philosophers) were experimenting in order to understand the physical world and to isolate and manipulate the properties of certain materials. "What is accomplished by fire is alchemy." Paracelsus (Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493-1541 – said to travel on a white horse and to carry the elixir of life in the pommel of his broadsword, he was loved by poets, a model for Goethe and Thomas Mann's versions of Faust) *Aurora Thesaurusque philosophorum*. As with all ancient metallurgy there was an air of ritual and ceremony that surrounded these tricks and astonished onlookers. To extract the quality of permanence by attempting to transmute base metals into gold was the same as the search for eternal youth. The potential of alchemy in medicine was seen as a possibility from the 13th century onwards. Doctors in the Middle Ages aspired to nothing less than the state of perfection in the Garden of Eden. They were going to achieve this humble feat by way of the 'elixir of life'. At the heart of Greek medicine was the belief that good health depended on a delicate balance between four vital fluids or humours: blood produced by the heart, phlegm produced by the brain, black bile from the liver and yellow bile from the gall bladder. The mixture of these determined character, implying different treatments for different patients and even carrying them out at different times of day, what are today called biorhythms. So whilst the failure to discover the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone has added to the description of the age as being one of suspicious ignorance, it is unfair. At the end of the 16th century, the German alchemist Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605), a physician and hermetic philosopher, writing a combination of Christianity and magic, stated "Darkness will appear on the face of the Abyss; Night, Saturn and the Antimony of the Sages will appear; blackness, and the raven's head of the alchemists, and all the colours of the world white and yellow, you will see the Philosopher's Stone".
- 38 Before the rise of biblical fundamentalism in the 19th century, the faithful were generally much freer in their interpretations of the Bible, for them a puzzling text merely indicating hidden meaning. So whilst Genesis was not considered to be inconsistent with either history or science, the fact that it was inconsistent with itself could be seen as an example of divine inspiration. Where science contradicted scripture Augustine used allegorical and philosophical readings to show how the biblical text should be interpreted figuratively rather than literally. Thus in theory he would have had no problem with either Copernicus or Galileo.
- 39 Mikolaj Kopernik, Copernicus, was a distinguished churchman and humanist born in Torun in Poland in 1473. He studied law and

medicine in Kraków and Padua, advised the Polish government on currency reform and the Pope on reform of the calendar. He died in 1543, the year *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, his mathematical description of the heavens, was published. He grew up in an age when the Greek ideal of perfect motion, the wheel, ordered everything. The planetary system of Copernicus was revolutionary. It put the sun at the centre of the heavens, but the planets still ran in circles. The wheel of the heavens had become an article of faith, the hosts of Heaven marched around the earth and to say otherwise was to challenge not only the Church but Almighty God. This geocentrism fitted in with several Bible passages and the Church's view of the world in general, that as home to God's greatest creation, the earth was the centre of everything. However, Copernicus guessed what Galileo Galilei proved; the heavenly system of Ptolemy did not work. Galileo, the creator of modern scientific method was born in 1564. By 1610 when his ideas were published as *Sidereus Nuncius*, the work of Copernicus had been put on the Index (of prohibited books) by the Catholic Church. In 1632, *Dialogo dei due massimi Sistemi del mondo* was published. It was an instant success but led to Galileo's trial the following year by the Inquisition in a building that is now part of the Post Office in Rome. His supposed parting comment to the inquisitors, "Eppur si muove", yet it does move, is apocryphal.

- 40 Vesalius qualified in 1537 and had a row with his tutors; they accused him of not appreciating Galen while he accused them of not understanding practice. At the age of 25 he was appointed demonstrator at Bologna. The professor was 65. In the 16th century, professors did the talking and demonstrators kept quiet. But this demonstrator could not keep quiet. The students must have loved the controversy.
- 41 Holy tourism improved cash flow. The pilgrim business developed with sinners being encouraged to visit a particular church and bestow pious gifts in exchange for penance. The number of churches qualifying as part of this scheme steadily grew until there were thousands of pilgrimage churches. The reward scheme developed too with a degree of release from God's punishment in this life or in purgatory becoming available, a sort of 'frequent pilgrim miles and more'. By the 14th century pilgrim indulgences were extended to negating sin itself and gave an opportunity to acquire an indulgence for the souls of those already languishing in purgatory. The best way to encourage tourism was to possess a relic, something that radiated miraculous power due to its being a contact point between Earth and Heaven. Thus sacred relics became big business and a source of revenue in themselves. Monasteries became trading organisations as monks became brilliant at finding ways of raising cash, staying within the confines of *Benedict's Rule*, the 6th century guidebook to monastic life – while leaving it dead on the cloister floor. Once the monasteries became commercial enterprises and prayer acquired monetary value, the game was bound to be up, sooner or later.
- 42 One of the first examples was the Lollards, religious dissidents who formed discreet communities in England in the 15th century and followed in the footsteps of Wyclif. One of their opinions was that the Church had a duty to help people live a life of evangelical poverty and imitate Jesus. It demonstrated the need to do away with the magical elements that were part of the Church in no uncertain manner: "That exorcisms and hallowings, made in the Church, of wine, bread and wax, water, salt and oil and incense, the stone of the altar, upon vestments, mitre, cross and pilgrims' staves, be the very practice of necromancy, not of holy theology. For... we see nothing of change in no such creatures that is so charmed, except by false belief, which is the principal of the Devil's craft." HS Cronin 'The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards' *English Historical Review* 22 1907 p298 quoted by Keith Thomas *Religion and the Decline of Magic* 1971.
- 43 Even in Cromwell's Puritan England astrological almanacs outsold the Bible. *ibid* pp485-90
- 44 The Dominicans were, with the Franciscans, the last of the religious orders to be created before the 16th century and the creation of the Papacy's shock troops, the Jesuits, *corps d'élite* of Catholic Reform.
- 45 White witches or 'cunning folk' were not considered mysterious at all, were known in their communities, coped with the hardships of life along with everyone else, they spoke their eclectic, shamanistic quasi-Christian blessing over animals in rituals appropriated from

Christianity, and healed disease with their potions. Nobody was scared of them.

- 46 Most of the victims were in areas of Germany controlled by the Catholic Prince-Bishops. Half of the executions in Western Europe were carried out in their territories. The Catholic Prince-Bishop of Bamberg, Johan Georg II Fuchs von Dornheim, had his own purpose-built witch-house, complete with a torture chamber that was decorated with biblical texts. In his ten-year reign (1623-33) he is said to have burned 300 witches. There was comparatively little witch hunting in Spain and Italy.
- 47 Witches were burned for the next 300 years. Protest against this fanatical persecution did not *begin* until the mid-17th century with the publication of Friedrich Spee's *Cantio criminalis*. The hysteria of the Reformation and Renaissance against witches was summed up in a phrase by Arthur Miller in his anti-McCarthyite play *The Crucible* where at the trial of the witches of Salem in 1692, which he used as a metaphor for the political situation in 1950s United States, John Proctor, the husband of one of the accused, says: "Is the accuser always holy now?" Miller skinned history alive. Silence was evidence of guilt; if you testified to a prisoner's innocence you must also be guilty. That was precisely the same as the phenomena surrounding 16th century witch-hunting, and later Jew-baiting and Communist purges.
- 48 The ability of witches to weave 'weather magic' and an inability to explain freak hailstorms, made people only too ready to consider the possibility that some force was deliberately manipulating the climate against it.
- 49 Book of Exodus 22:18
- 50 Prior to a trial, suspects were usually humiliated by being shaved completely in order to ensure that the Devil had not secreted anything in their body. Because the shaving would be done by the official executioner (who was also responsible for torture) and he was considered dishonourable, to have been touched by him would automatically make the suspect dishonourable and exclude them from relationships with other people, whatever the outcome of their trial.
- 51 The Devil was known to be a master of illusion. This led to ludicrous scenes. Accusations of child murder might prompt a town council to investigate the grave, no evidence of anything diabolical would be found, whereupon it would be declared that this proved a devilish act had been perpetrated, because the Devil was so cunning!
- 52 John Huxtable Elliot *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* 1963 p13
- 53 *ibid* p249
- 54 Wars cost money. This meant gold, silver and credit. The wealth of the New World was sensational. European gold and silver stocks multiplied eight times between 1536 and 1636; a trickle became a stream and then a torrent until Spain became literally inundated with bullion. This new found wealth was spent almost entirely on war. Instead of fertilising Spain, the country was laid waste, the export trade destroyed, the people demoralised. This stream of wealth flowed through Spain into the hands of moneylenders in Genoa, Antwerp and Augsburg. It stimulated a new way of life, modern capitalism. Gold and silver spent in the Netherlands financed the Baltic States and became the centre of reformed religion, equated God with Mammon and ripened into bourgeois civilisation.
- 55 With its origins in the Roman Empire, the Inquisition was a legal technique for establishing the truth by a set form of questioning. It did not specifically concern religion and heresy. After the 11th century when the Church was reorganised interest in an individual's belief became the norm and it became a useful instrument again. In south-western France, the Albigenian Crusade to eradicate the Cathars at the start of the 13th century led to a resurgence of the Inquisition of Heretical Depravity after 1231. It was then used against a range of enemies, from the rich such as the Knights Templar to the poor such as the Fraticelli. It was later established in Castile and Aragon because of a problem unique to Christian Spain, baptised Jews and three or four generations of descendants. It was specifically introduced there to prevent lynch law. There was a fear of

Conversos and *Moriscos*; Jewish and Moslem converts to Christianity, being used as a pretext for uprisings, civil war, public disturbance and riots by nobles disputing the sovereignty of the dual monarchs. It was fear of an enemy within. The monarchs had been fighting civil wars, backed by Portugal in Castile. The threat of disorder in Andalusia was acute. An aspect of this internal revolt was believed to be religious dissent taking the form of insincere Christians of Jewish and Moslem origin. That led to religion and politics becoming mixed as the monarchs, fired by God's will, sought to unify the state: religious unity became a form of political centralisation. The primary aim of inquisitors was to reconcile souls to God but because politics was so intertwined with religion, any form of doctrinal divergence was seen as equal to treason. Ferocious in its first few years, the Inquisition would visit towns, announce an Edict of Grace, whereby anyone knowing a person guilty of certain acts had to make a declaration to that effect within one month. Huge numbers of people made voluntary confessions and denunciations. Many of these people were reconciled with the Church, others were tried. On arrest their possessions were confiscated thus making the Inquisition self-financing. There was an assumption of guilt, questioning was largely with regards daily life rather than theology, the guilty were 'released to the secular arm' who would carry out, what for us today seems, unimaginable, incomprehensible, extensive and intensive torture. In the 15th century 50-60% were burnt at the stake. Relativism had no mileage for any member of any faith; each revelation was the only one, perfect, complete and valid. This justified barbarity in defence of a mortal soul. The Inquisition had overwhelming popular support. People accepted the link between religion and the safety of society; that orthodoxy meant political loyalty. Confessions of faith, the *auto da fé*, were carried out as public theatrical tragedies to convince people that they were right in their beliefs. The Spanish Inquisition was unique in being almost universally made up of lawyers rather than theologians. Despite the original fear, the majority of cases were not against Jews and Moslems but denial by Christians of the nine fundamental Christian beliefs. (There was no Inquisition against Jews and Moslems who had not converted to Christianity.) The majority of those tried were very poor which led to the courts being largely bankrupt. Those charged had too few possessions that could be sold to cover the court's costs.

- 56 Rudolph Häpke wrote of "an archipelago of towns" in reference to Flanders to describe how the cities were linked to Bruges in the 15th century and later Antwerp. Henri Pirenne coined the phrase "The Netherlands are a suburb of Antwerp". In 1515 in the Netherlands 140,180 people lived in towns out of a total population of 274,810, ie 51%. See Jan de Vries *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age 1500-1700* 1974 p86.
- 57 Owen Chadwick *The Reformation* 1972 p168
- 58 Under the regency of Margaret (1559-67) three protesters, William the Silent (1533-84), Lamoral, Count of Egmont and Philip Montmorency, Count of Hoorn, petitioned the King, only to be ridiculed as *Genzen*, beggars. They believed they had persuaded Philip to moderate the repression, when in reality the King was preparing to suppress heresy at whatever cost. In 1565 in the Edict of Segovia the King refused to authorise any change, completely rejecting reform. The Inquisition would continue as ordained by the laws of God and man. In order not to give heretics the opportunity of public martyrdom, executions would be carried out at midnight in the dungeons – by binding heads between the knees and slowly suffocating in water tubs. Any hope there might have ever been of compromise had vanished.
- 59 Pieter Bruegel painted *The Sermon of St John the Baptist* in 1566, oil on panel 95x160.5cm Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest. "There can be little doubt that Bruegel was inspired in some way by the controversial and perhaps most spectacular phenomenon associated with the rise of the movement, namely, the illegal gatherings (*hagenpreken*) held by itinerant field preachers on the outskirts of towns and villages which, according to some (possibly exaggerated) reports, attracted thousands of followers. Bruegel may indeed have attended a meeting of this kind... his painting... does not constitute evidence that he was a follower of the Calvinist or Mennonite movements, as some authors claim." Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p233. Sellink also notes that the painting was owned by "the joint sovereign of the Seventeen Provinces, Archduchess Isabella, who

could hardly be suspected of harbouring Calvinist sympathies."

- 60 In Donauwörth that is precisely what happened. The Peace of Augsburg had unravelled, ecumenical theological misunderstanding prevailed, confusion and disarray on the Protestant side convinced many that a major turning-point in God's plans for the world were at hand, a divinely ordered climax to world history was believed to be imminent, the Reformation was falling short of its initial hopes, people looked for signs and portents from Heaven – urged on by the clergy. Lutheran historians were encouraged by the idea of patterns of years, a celebration of Luther as Germany's Moses rose to new heights and, if Luther was Moses, then King David would not be far behind! Bizarre additional excitement was provided by publication of the Rosicrucian tracts, symptomatic of the febrile atmosphere that led to the war. They promised a new world of enlightened culture, harmony and human achievement, a measure of the way in which Protestant Europe's expectations now transcended a narrow Reformed Protestant militancy. These manifestos came from the same world as the hermetic, Paracelsian, mystical, magical enthusiasm of those believing that a new phase of human history was about to begin. Defensive alliances established, a Protestant Union and a Catholic League, battle lines were being set, the Thirty Years War was about to begin. See Frances Yates *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* 1972 ch 4
- 61 Motley *Rise of the Dutch Republic* 1900 taken online from The Project Gutenberg EBook 4814, January 2004
- 62 Pius V bestowed on Alva a consecrated hat and sword, a gift previously only given to sovereigns. In Antwerp, the governor erected a bronze statue of himself trampling under foot the nobility and the people. Having proclaimed that the expenses of the war must be borne by the Netherlands, Alva then drained the resources of the people by taxation. He introduced the 'tax of the one hundredth, twentieth, and tenth penny'.
- 63 Geoffrey Parker *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659* 1972
- 64 Paul Kennedy *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Political Conflict, 1500-2000* 1988 p61
- 65 Braudel *A History of Civilisations* 1987 p323
- 66 *The Magpie on the Gallows* oil on panel 45.9x50.8cm Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. One of two works known to remain in the family after Bruegel died, the other was the grisaille *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* 24.1x34.4cm Courtauld Institute of Art, London.
- 67 Alpers *Vexations of Art* 2005 p83
- 68 ibid p111 "Bruegel is different from the painters in the European tradition... He painted humans attentively at work (ploughing a field or building a tower) at their pleasures (lying down under a tree during a mid day break from hay making; dancing) at their cruelty (stringing a convict up for all to see) – but not experiencing pain. Experience in that sense was not within the range of his preferred figural type. Suffering is common in painting and it is often inseparable from the violence that causes it with all due respect to Auden, one relevance the older painters have to terrible times is that they were so good at violence. Painters took pride in it." We must assume Alpers is referring to "About suffering they were never wrong / The Old Masters..." from *Musée des Beaux Arts* written by Auden in 1938. Armed horsemen supervising organised slaughter in *The Massacre of the Innocents*? The Apocalyptic vision of *The Triumph of Death*? Imagery that was a throwback to the grotesque world of Bosch was one way to come to terms with the unfolding horrors of the times.
- 69 Jean-Paul Sartre *Question de méthode* included in *Critique de la raison dialectique* 1960 p29; English *The Problem of Method* transl Nazeel Barnes 1963
- 70 Shakespeare *Hamlet* Act I, Scene V line166 from the *Second Quarto* of 1604. Hamlet had been a student at Wittenberg, the university of Luther and Faust. The play was the product of a time of doubt, a shattering, worrying play; a clinical dissection of life. Hamlet is a

man in crisis. His love for his parents, his feelings for his friends, his country, his political responsibilities, his honour, his religion, his politics, his philosophy are being torn apart. He is done down by an experience so complex that it leads to profound disillusionment and finally a terrible fatalism. In desperation he turns to his friend Horatio more and more.

- 71 The 'natural light of reason' as a concept was traced to Melanchton, *De lege naturae* of 1559, via that to Cicero and the Stoic philosophers whose texts were revived in a form compatible with Christianity and translated by Joost Lips (Justus Lipsius, 1547-1606) in Leiden. With the fruits of the scientific revolution and the rationalism of Descartes it formed the core of the ideology that held centre stage for the next hundred years.
- 72 Why should we be surprised? In the 21st century, disillusion with science and religion has made some people turn to the paranormal, something that tells them there is an afterlife. Small ads in many newspapers contain countless columns promoting the details of psychics, clairvoyants and mediums. Television stations that can sell advertising on the basis of a haunted location are a growth area. In the USA there are cable channels devoted to the supernatural and the inexplicable where there is an apparent mania for ghost hunting and communing with the dead. Some Christians still believe that proximity to this world of hidden spirits can unleash forces that are not only dangerous but also intrinsically evil, putting our mortal soul in danger. The search for a cheap spiritual thrill has today become a substitute for a spiritual encounter through religion whereas in the 15th and 16th centuries people believed devoutly in both religion and the supernatural.
- 73 Fernand Braudel *Civilisation & Capitalism 15-18th Century* Vol 3 *The Perspective of the World* 1979 p625
- 74 Patrick Collinson *The Reformation* 2003 p85
- 75 Only in its spiritual domain did the Catholic Church retain absolute power, something it would retain until the Second Vatican council, 1962-65. Asked why the Council was needed, Pope John XXIII reportedly opened a window and said, "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in". 2540 Council Fathers took part in the opening session, making it the largest gathering of any Council in Church history. Two of the four purposes put forward by the Pope for calling the Council were (yet again) 'to renew the Church' and 'to restore unity among all Christians, including seeking pardon for Catholic contributions to separation'. The so-called 'spirit of Vatican II' was not shared by everyone. Traditionalists saw it as a move away from historic principles of Catholic faith, the cause of a decline in vocations, the erosion of Catholic belief and the influence of the Church, together with a change of focus from seeking the salvation of souls to improving mankind's situation on earth. Nevertheless the Mass was finally in the vernacular, 450 years after Luther – and, in the final days of the Council there was a Catholic-Orthodox Joint Declaration expressing regret for actions that had led to the schism between the western and eastern churches in 1054AD. Attempts from 1409 onwards to make the Church more constitutional finally made it with the College of Bishops. Reform had nearly always been on the agenda. Maybe we should ask, would conciliarism in the 15th century have pre-empted the Reformation?

6

Politics – a paradise postponed

Reframing expectations

From encyclopaedic enterprise to the Apocalypse:
The Fall of the Rebel Angels

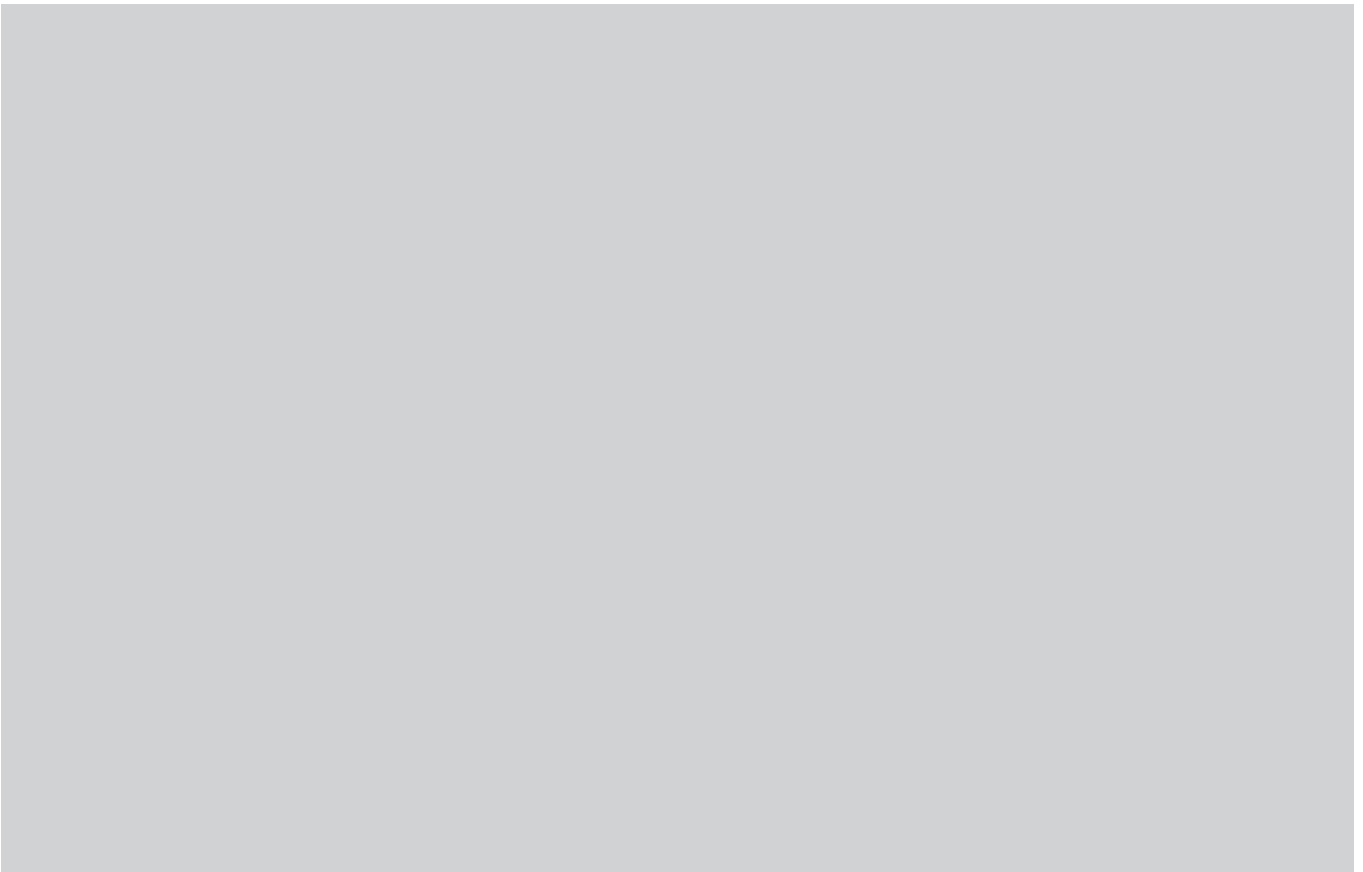
Netherlands, nether world: *The Triumph of Death*

Entr'acte Jake and Dinos Chapman

A New Terror: *The Conversion of Saul*

Entr'acte Gerhard Richter

Facts are subversive



145 *The Falling Soldier* 5 September 1936 © Robert Capa/International Center of Photography, Magnum Photos

Reframing expectations

"Art is always manipulation" Ángeles González-Sinde¹

"What constitutes a political image, or alternatively, how do pictures, even those not normally seen to be political, operate implicitly as discursive instruments of political argument?"

Margaret Carroll²

"In art, one has to kill one's father" Pablo Picasso

PICTURES change everything. If there can be no art without history, neither can there be history without images. Without images we are lost. The more powerful the more significant and important. A Buddhist monk immolating himself, a prisoner's twisted expression as a bullet fired from a pistol at the end of an outstretched arm enters his brain, a little girl running naked down a path, her skin alight from napalm, a hooded man standing on a box, with electrical wires dangling from his outstretched hands, are seared into our collective memory.³ They inhabit our unconscious as deeply as the pictures of two skyscrapers collapsing in Manhattan.

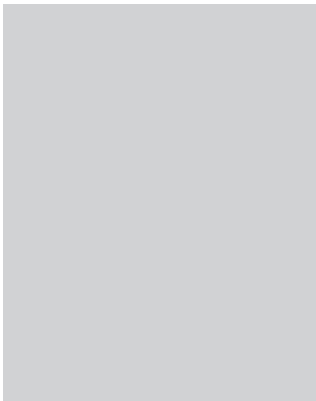
But pictures may conceal as much as they reveal.⁴ Without the pictures taken by a small group of amateurish, under-trained reserve soldiers placed at the cutting edge of the so-called 'war on terror' and ordered to deliver information, nobody would have known what happened at Abu Graib – or been punished. And the pictures were part of the torture. The prisoners were threatened with the photographs being made public. The photograph of the hooded prisoner quickly achieved iconic status. There were many other pictures, thousands of them, many depicting more serious abuse, but its "fascination resides, in large part, in its mystery and inscrutability – in all that is concealed by all that is revealed. It is an image of carnival weirdness; this upright body shrouded from head to foot; those wires; that pose that recalls, of course, the crucifixion; the peaked hood that carries so many vague and ghoulish associations."⁵ The complicity that followed, the blind eyes turned, the cover-up, the self-deception, the cowardice, the indiscipline and the incompetence infested every link in the chain of command, from the 372nd Military Police to the White House, yet the soldiers, who we now understand had taken the photographs in a calculated effort to protect themselves knowing their aggressive orders from the euphemistically titled 'Other Government Agencies' were wrong, were the only ones prosecuted.⁶ No pictures no crime; the exposé became the cover up. The irony was absolute. Fear and ideology had led to the undermining and evasion of conventions and rules, and a visceral disdain for international obligations.⁷ The more powerful the images, the more significant and important. Some photographs of alleged abuse by soldiers in Iraq were later admitted to be fakes. Eyewitnesses admitted the events had taken place but the images were later proved to be false. But frequently the news cycle moves so fast that the real story gets little coverage once it is spelled out.

In an age when it has never been easier to erase history, people cropped or airbrushed out of a photograph, we also inhabit a digital age without the capacity to forget; social networking moments enshrined in cyberspace, search engines knowing our every click of a mouse, nothing has an expiration date any more, the virtue of forgetting lost as we are condemned to be encumbered by a past we can no longer leave. No one ever called Google the first draft of history but search algorithms appear to have become sacred. Abu Graib has been rebranded, today's solution to almost everything, as Baghdad's Central Prison. The world of alternative media was flooded with fake images almost immediately after the release of genuine images of atrocity committed by US troops in Iraq. Specialists in deliberate disinformation, together with the gullible, will today act as willing conduits for such things. That is the way of the world. The minefield of deception that they create breeds confusion, distraction and downgrades credibility

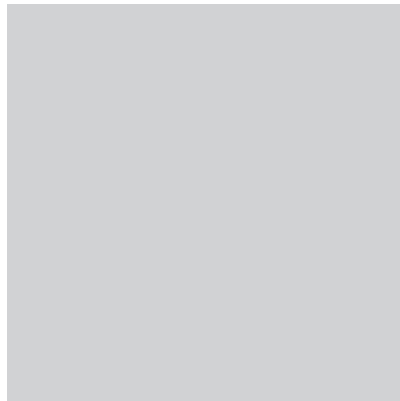
of reality. It is a perfect spiral created to discredit the truth and create a backlash of opinion. The truth is eclipsed by the hoax, the hoax is uncovered, the truth is downgraded, reaction is diluted as each seed of doubt is planted and cultivated.

The truth is rarely black and white. Acting from the best of motives, Robert Capa may have faked 'the falling soldier' shot in Spain on 5 September 1936. If Capa did fake that photograph, to many it now seems indefensible. It is still an astonishing image so does it matter? It made more people take notice of the war in Spain as it caught or purported to catch, the moment of death, the tumble into oblivion, that imbalance, the empty landscape, a life emptying out. It may be an artistic shot but it is not art, it was supposed to be the truth, veracity, the real deal. It is now easier than ever to fake a photograph. Perhaps it should not matter, but it does, especially when men are still dying in ragged clothes, in the sun, on a forsaken hillside far away. 50 kilometres away.⁸

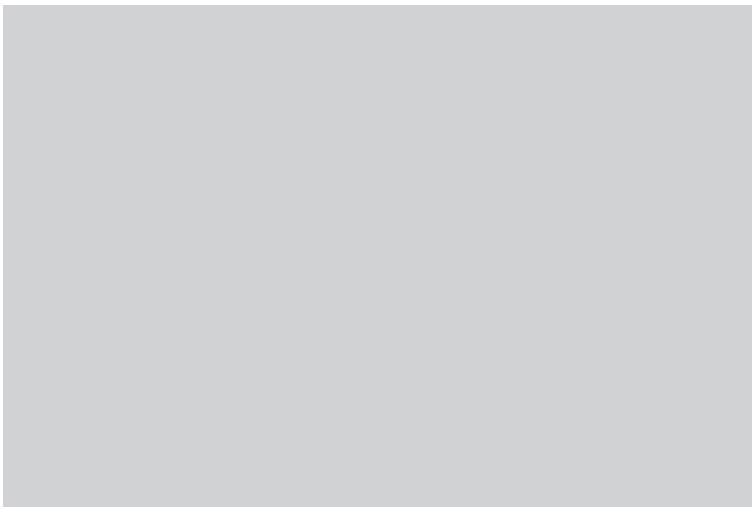
Pictures can change everything. Bosch saw the world wallowing in evil, sunk in sin. Bruegel on the other hand saw people only sunk in drudgery, toil, hardship and poverty, in a fight for survival. He also saw them being persecuted and subjected to a vicious occupation, overseen by one of his best clients. He had progressively to hide more and more about what he really felt and believed. There is no doubt Bruegel painted violence well because he lived in a violent world.



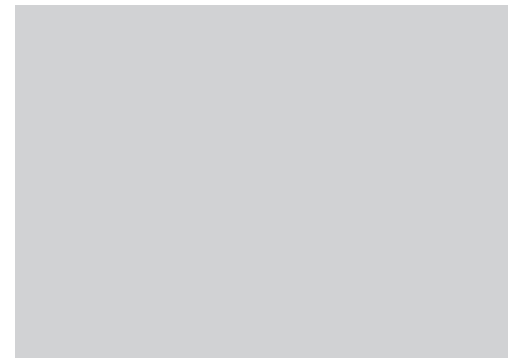
146 Abu Ghraib photo by Sgt Ivan Frederick that was claimed by Ali Shalal Qaissi to be of him, only it is not Ali. It later became evident that it was another prisoner, Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh.



147 kennardphillips *Photo Op* 2005 "It was originally printed on newsprint as a poster for the G8 protests in 2005." Where the art world meets the art of the manipulated image. Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps created a 'photo op' that defines the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Apparently delighted with himself and what he has achieved the subject's subsequent notoriety means some viewers will take it as fact. On 9 October 2013 the *Evening Standard* headlined 'Tony Blair's crazed selfie'. The collective subconscious viewed it as true. The Imperial War Museum North chose it as the image for its campaign to advertise the exhibition *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War*. However, the owners of the advertising space, CBS Outdoor, ClearChannel and JCDcaux, banned it.



148 Leon Golub 1981 *Interrogation I* acrylic on linen 304.8x447.04cm (120x176in)
The Broad Art Foundation © 2014 Leon Golub/ADAGP Paris



149 Leon Golub 1981 *Interrogation II* acrylic on canvas 305x427cm (120x168in)
Gift of Society for Contemporary Art 1983. 264
The Art Institute of Chicago
© 2014 Leon Golub/ADAGP Paris

Spend time looking at some of Bruegel's panels and yes, they are funny, vital, dazzling, all those brilliantly choreographed crowds, the luxurious detail, but they can also be brilliantly subversive, haunting, administering a delayed frisson, a slowly gathering shock; it is the thrill of sudden intuition, and then revelation, an epiphany. When the Bruegel effect kicks in it can haunt you for ever. Vladimir Nabokov would remind his students "simplicity is bunkum". No major artist is simple. As stated at the beginning, if pictures are puzzles then art historians are the detectives, but that simply presenting the facts does not solve a problem, they have to be pieced together, analysed and interpreted. As it is with Bruegel. Similarly being a Christian.

A Christian is like a detective in a crime novel. The evidence points in one direction but the detective's intuition, based on a clue that everyone else has overlooked, shows that the truth is rather different. So it is with Bruegel. With Bruegel and his images of tragedy and human cruelty we have to go back to the hidden clue in Jesus, 'God among us, sharing our plight and raising us to a new eternal dimension of living'.⁹ Was Bruegel a Protestant, by persuasion, inclination or practice? Even if he was not considered to have been inclined towards Protestantism, his work shows a Protestant sympathy. The Catholic Church certainly seems to have lost him. But as Edna O'Brien wrote of James Joyce: "Leaving the Church is not the same as leaving God".

Bruegel was a chameleon, could operate according to wherever he was, assimilate himself and doubtless manipulate people. He passed through the Protestant needle, and for reasons doubtless of self-preservation could pretend he was well out of it. Hardly a shard of light has been cast on this. Did he really visit Italy? Did he really 'spit out the Alps'?¹⁰ Does his work demonstrate the accumulated skills of the Northern and Southern Renaissance – all the arts and wiles of Dürer and Leonardo – brought to a point of crystalline perfection? It is certainly not that of a Holbein whose work combines north and south in a technically perfect but coldly analytical way, portraits of people on edge, those patrician powerbrokers that appear embarrassed by a painter's scrutiny. His figures are not high and mighty specimens, distinguished courtiers under a microscope, they are real people at work and play, and all the better for it.

To view the change from full frontal attack on evil of Bosch to the apparently subtle allegories satirising human weakness in Bruegel's world, is to miss what the 'Second Bosch' is really about. The soubriquet is more accurate than it is flattery. Style aside, the religious intensity of Bruegel is too often overlooked in favour of jolly peasants. It is the religious pictures, so often ignored by modern scholarship, that reflect the age he lived in, and that will engage us here. Their significance is concealed – the critic, like a preacher, having to reveal what is submerged is somehow central to our idea of art. The superficially unchallenging does not prompt the usual 'What does it mean?' But with Bruegel we discover, it is about meaning itself.

In the next two chapters I am going to consider five paintings.

A New Terror: *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *The Conversion of Saul*

Europe might be taking shape, reform in the air, scientific discovery, mathematics, overseas exploration, a sense of freedom, liberation, curiosity, newness, rebirth; yet still the old world lived on. The world had changed fundamentally but Bruegel had not changed with it. The Fall of the Rebel Angels is a painting that comes out of a medieval mind.¹¹ It is not an image of the modern world. The age of discovery had arrived but fear of the unknown remained. Man's horizons were expanding in every direction, minds were being liberated, the intellectual repercussions enormous. Man was in the process of being liberated from his past. But for Bruegel the time was ripe for painting *The Archangel Michael Slaying the Apocalyptic Dragon*. It is an image that comes from a world lost to us.

A late medieval man looks back.

Bruegel had arrived at a personal crossroads. He was moving away from printmaking to concentrate on painting. He had changed his signature from Brueghel to Bruegel.¹² His subject matter moved away from the fun and games of paintings loaded with human behaviour, to imagery within a religious and moral framework that confronted the ideological conflict of the age, the personal dilemmas facing everyone, and a society threatened with dissolution. The artist's long and winding road through the mountains is an arduous road to truth – for Bruegel, a saint and us.¹³ When St Paul sent his despatches from the front line he dealt with pressing issues of the day. Homophobic, misogynistic, and generally bigoted, Paul gets a bad press today. The headlines of his life convey the impact he made. Credited with writing 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament, he is the hero of another, Acts. He is not someone you can be neutral about. Vigorously enforcing orthodoxy, as Saul he was a Christian persecutor on a personal vendetta, a vigilante for Judaism. He was a tough guy. At times he received a raw deal from a Catholic Church that always promoted Peter as the foundation of the papacy, whereas Paul is closely associated with the Reformation and Luther. Two approaches, two quite different temperaments, two personalities; it is easy to see why Paul would appeal to Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

Early modern man looks ahead.

Netherlands, nether world: *The Triumph of Death*¹⁴

It is astonishing, an image from another age, a medieval spectre of conflict, a great war for civilisation made real on a battlefield, unforgiving violence taken to unimaginable extremes, a place too hot for artists. But it is not another age, it was then, and then, and it is now. We are there in the trenches and the craters of No Man's Land once again, there at the firebombing, there among the naked and the dead, there at the holocaust, armies of death formed up in an apocalyptic nightmare of evil. This is not merely reportage, no sterile protest, this is timeless history, a narrative of metaphorical evidence, more disturbing precisely because it lacks documentation. This really is the heart of darkness, alienation at its most extreme, a howl of protest, an anguished, blistering, eye-searing, unwatchable, defining piece of hopeless frustration. We are presented with no new evidence, it tells us nothing we do not already know, no new insight into the reality of war on the ground, but this is disturbing, gut-churning stuff. This is communication of unforced truth, the horrors are unleashed, the rhetoric is unbounded, we are dragged into a Hell on earth, this is what it is like, a raw chunk of poetic reality. The clichés of warfare do not do justice to the starkness of the narrative. We the audience can supply the rage – and gasp, awestruck, at the enormity of it all.

There is almost a desperation about it, a determination that we not miss the point. Never forget. Ever.

In the Shadow of Evil: *The Massacre of the Innocents*¹⁵

As to whether Bruegel was an earnest but generous humanist, one who addressed the folly of mankind and the innocence of childhood, his pictures are more than an interpretive challenge. *The Massacre of the Innocents* is not misleading as such, but many have chosen to be misled by it. How should the artist respond to violence and suffering in the world? What are the artists' ethical and political responsibilities? After the celebratory, the comical, and the complex, the playful and hence popular, 'apotheoses of folly and childhood', Bruegel made a choice, to grapple with that brutal, tortuous, difficult question, and to address the cruelty and suffering that was all around him. His answers show no pity as he arrives at a stark response to that question; it is not the artist's task to rationalise, soften or explain, but to record, expose and to inflict. Bruegel is a topical artist. At the end of 1567 Ortelius wrote of the state of affairs in the Low Countries as being threatened by "Catholic evil, Protestant fever, Huguenot disease and different vexations from black riders and other soldiers".¹⁶ But the maelstrom had arrived before

that and Bruegel knew it. This is not a grand visual metaphor. This is straightforward reportage. "I was there." History and art intersect right here at this point.

Faith and Fear: *Procession to Calvary*¹⁷

Was Bruegel really an orthodox Roman Catholic? Does this painting mark a turning point in his beliefs? Is the spectacle of the suffering Christ hauling the cross through profane earthly experience a new kind of devotional image, one where the biblical narrative unfolds across the panel as we contemplate the third station of the cross as symbolic enactment of the pilgrimage of life, all reinforced by the wheeling composition that asserts both the inevitability and continuity of the event? Calvary. The greatest subject, one of the greatest works of art, a master in command of his medium, this is the story of the passion of Flanders in Bruegel's day; a straightforward picture of Christ's Passion on a cold, damp Springtime Friday, in which Jesus appears, lost in a teeming crowd of hundreds, carrying his cross from Jerusalem to Calvary, marked by the circle of an expectant crowd. We are right in there with the crowd. Having a fun day out. Christ goes unrecognised. The significance of this particular crucifixion is lost on them. His disappearance into the crowd only serves to confront us with a moral choice; would we be cheering the soldiers on, gloating on violence and retribution, or one of that sad bunch of defeated cowards, the disciples, who ran away? We are being interrogated: "Where were you when they crucified my Lord?" Bruegel was there.

I will also address the question of Bruegel's visit to Italy.

Foreign affairs – a Roman Holiday

Why the fuss, why the conviction, why the certainty? An emotional, unreliable writer who was not a witness, convinces everyone through the power of his words that Bruegel went to Italy? How could this happen? Is it true? Where is the proof? Why is it hardly ever questioned? The point of departure for the study of art in the Low Countries is Karel van Mander, frequently mentioned as a primary source. But Bruegel's life is elusive, his biography problematic, his beliefs and opinions unknown, his background guesswork, the archives all but empty. Not entirely accurate, especially with regards earlier artists, Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* of 1604 has nevertheless been taken as gospel; "travelling to France and thence to Italy" he wrote and ever since everyone has skewed what little is known in order to prove it. Van Mander panders to his subjects.

Did Bruegel really visit Italy?

The world according to Bruegel

If Bosch reflects his age in that his work represents art as religion, I have no doubt that for Bruegel, art was religion and politics. Religious and political upheaval, plus the remarkable economic, cultural and scientific achievement, particularly in northern Europe, that marked the emergence from the late Middle Ages to the modern era, were more apparent in the Netherlands than anywhere else. "These lands are rooted above all in commerce" Charles V wrote to Henry III of Nassau in 1534, "we must not lose sight of this" – and neither must we. The economic hub of Europe, and its most densely populated region, it became the focal point for trade with the new world and Asia. This virtuous circle of prosperity and power was ruptured with the abdication of Charles when his dynastic aspirations and vision of a unified empire failed. Dissent, eradication of privileges, economic malaise, severe food shortages, the spread of Protestantism and in particular Calvinism with its iconoclastic gangs, bad weather, wave after wave of revolt, inevitably all had artistic consequences. But perhaps, after all, it was not so much Everyman's story Bruegel had been telling; more his own.



150 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* Brussels, KMSK/MRBAB



151 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Netherlandish Proverbs
Berlin Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie



152 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
The Battle Between Carnival and Lent
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



153 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Children's Games
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

From encyclopaedic enterprise to the Apocalypse: *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*

"An artist is a bloke who can hold two fundamentally opposing views and still function: who dreamed that one up? 'Scott Fitzgerald'" John le Carré¹⁸

THE MODERN Catholic Catechism teaches that angels are a 'truth of faith', meaning roughly that if you believe in them they are true, and they are true because you believe – to which there is no adequate riposte. The importance of angels to divine enterprise makes them naturally hierarchical. The nine medieval orders still exist, those around the throne of God, the front three Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones; then a midfield of Dominations, Virtues and Powers, with a back row of Principalities, Archangels and Angels. This is where we find the heroes of the angel world, the archangels, blond, muscled and shining, including Michael who slays the Devil.

In the Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Bruegel's poster boy Michael, clad in golden armour, is falling on the apocalyptic dragon. In a grand whirl of perpetual motion set in "a unique spatial perspective" Michael leads the assault by an angelic army in its assault against the rebels.¹⁹

"And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought with his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night."²⁰

Bruegel's painting is one of the finest and most original illustrations of this passage from the Apocalypse. It was one of five paintings Bruegel produced around 1562. It marks the stage in his early thirties when Bruegel turned away from printmaking and concentrated on painting, and the beginning of a productive surge that stayed at the same high tempo until the year before he died.

Europe might be taking shape, reform in the air, scientific discovery, mathematics, overseas exploration, a sense of freedom, liberation, curiosity, newness, rebirth; yet still the old world lived on. The world had changed fundamentally but Bruegel had not changed with it. This is a painting that comes out of a medieval mind. It is not an image of the modern world.

The age of discovery had arrived but fear of the unknown remained. Man's horizons had expanded in every direction. As minds were liberated the intellectual repercussions were enormous. Man was in the process of being liberated from his past. But for Bruegel the time was ripe for a painting of *Archangel Michael Slaying the Apocalyptic Dragon*, the alternative title given to *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*. It is an image that comes from a world lost to us. But why would he choose to announce a new focus for his career with this image? Was it part of a series of three paintings? Why did Bruegel's work swing decisively away from the format, style, technique and composition of his encyclopaedic enterprise in *Netherlandish Proverbs*, and *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* both from 1559, and *Children's Games* from 1560?²¹ What made him move away from a focus on these inventories of human activity; one of over 100 proverbs, one a Rabelaisian romp of wickedness and foolishness, and one showing the antics of 250 children? Do two small monkeys and a few hazelnuts hold the clue?

The three paintings from 1559-60, the first Bruegels with unquestioned attribution, are submersed in humanity.²² With detail piled on detail, their loose, fragmented composition is suggestive of the commercial art of a printmaker's imagery.²³ Their very complexity has led

to their popularity. They are picture puzzles and everyone, not just art historians, plays the game of decoding them. But they are more than an interpretive challenge. The multitude of picturesque scenes are superficially frivolous, satirical entertainment, cataloguing the human menagerie, but these images are also mocking and moralising, an ironic commentary on man's folly, denouncing the futility of much of man's endeavour as a pictorial theatre of the absurd.

"All the world's a stage /And all the men and women merely players", just for our entertainment.²⁴ But many of the 'children' in the third picture are in fact adults: "They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages" suggests we are looking at people at play, an image of *homo ludens*, or just possibly that the painting could have been the beginning of an ages of man series on their own.²⁵ However, the child-adults, none of whom appear particularly happy, bring to mind not just Huizinga's play element in culture, but also the lines of St Paul in Corinthians: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child".²⁶ Children or adults? It is all too easy to over-sentimentalise childhood or to deny its complexity. But just as Jesus suggested that adults have a lot to learn about God from their children, is Bruegel proposing the same thing? A child's response to the nature of existence is typically one of wonderment and joy. Children instinctively regard the world as a gift to be celebrated and enjoyed, which, as it happens, is precisely how Christianity thinks of the world as well. For, whilst a grim-faced Puritanism hijacked some versions of the Christian faith, the real thing is fundamentally an act of celebration, a response of thanksgiving to the joy-provoking character of existence. Was that Christian message hidden in the play?

The 1560s was no time for children's games.

Amused by each of these spectacles of humanity, people miss the underlying seriousness of Bruegel in everything he does. Bruegel transports us back over four centuries to a time when everyone looks to be having fun. Where did all the good times go? Within 50 years of this painting the European world appears to have been struck by an epidemic of depression that plunged young and old into months and even years of morbid lethargy and relentless terrors. We seem to have been living with it ever since.²⁷ The decline in opportunities for traditional pleasures is later reflected in John Bunyan's march to a life free of fun. In *Pilgrim's Progress* carnival is the portal to Hell, just as pleasure in any form, sexual, gustatory, convivial, is the devil's snare. It seems that while the medieval peasant enjoyed the festivities as an escape from work, the Puritan embraced work as an escape from terror.²⁸

Progress came with a price. The new world had not yet made a Faustian pact with the Devil to gain its brilliant advances in science, exploration and industry but it had swept away some of the traditional cures for the depression that those achievements brought in tow.²⁹

But still, the old world had its own demons to fight. As visitors to the museums where this group of three pictures hang, smile, laugh even, and check those inventories of activity, the link between laughter and spirituality goes unnoticed. The ability to laugh can help us through the best and worst of times. Its importance for our spiritual wellbeing is generally neglected. Gibson commented that "Bruegel's contemporaries would have reacted at least to some of his art with amusement and outright laughter" and that his moral lessons were often concealed, "accessible only to the more astute viewers" but he does not make the direct link to spirituality.³⁰ Because laughter is spontaneous, because it can arrive unbidden and because it is fun, a laugh is often dismissed as less profound than crying. Glee is generally seen as a human response less moving than misery. Soldiers at the front carry laughter as a weapon. They have a triumphant armoury of humour. Oh, it's a lovely war. Comedy in war zones is a healing and infectious form of resistance. To make light together of what scares us is one way to resist darkness, the belly laugh as an act of courage.³¹ Laughter has power, and the power to provoke laughter in others is a gift. It is impossible to imagine a genuinely spiritual person

who cannot get a joke and is unable to laugh. And that must mean sometimes unable to laugh at him or herself. A laugh that rises over all boundaries, a celebration to unite us all in tears of joy: Bruegel comes close, but he also reminds us of our own shortcomings. Why does the Devil always have the best tunes?

But great art devotes itself to laughter too.

The absurdity of Bruegel's characters comes straight out of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, a fantasy and satire on the self-deception on much of human endeavour, mocking human pretensions, monks and theologians, the scholastic intellectual substructure that supported late Medieval piety. Erasmus cites Democritus who was supposedly constantly amused by the spectre of humanity.³² The book first appeared in 1511, and underwent numerous revisions and additions until the last corrections in 1532. It was an instant success. The book's narrator is Folly who portrays life as an absurd spectacle lambasting the foibles and frailties of mankind, only to praise the 'folly' of simple Christian piety, the pious ideals in which Erasmus had been educated, and spirituality of *The Imitation of Christ*, four treatises from the 15th century attributed to Thomas à Kempis. Erasmus and À Kempis were both Augustinian canons, more importantly both had their roots in the *devotio moderna* to which Erasmus remained faithful to the end of his life. The text of *Folly* is a potent mix of wit, wisdom and wordplay, but it culminates in a serious indictment of churchmen, and sets out the virtues of a Christian way of life that St Paul says looks to the world like folly: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of speech, less the cross of Christ should be void. For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God".³³ This is the crossroads of belief where Renaissance Christianity and Medieval religion collide, and evangelical humanists take the turning signposted scripture. The pilgrim's way had forked and despite the lure of side roads such as 'theological backlash' and 'millenarianism', two major routes had opened up, and remained open, to choose from.

Bruegel stood at that crossroads and never quite made up his mind which direction to go in. As he wavered in his decision, he was also sensibly never open about exactly what he believed. "He lived at a time and place in which free and open expression of certain ideas could mean death."³⁴ But he left a lot of clues. As ever, we must be careful. Reviewing Edward Snow, Carroll "warns against relying too rigidly on the kinds of evidence art historians have traditionally used to guide their interpretations: ethnographic information used to identify the individual games, iconographic evidence to decode their emblematic significance; and iconological evidence to delineate 16th century cultural attitudes toward childhood, folly, and education".³⁵

*Two Monkeys*³⁶

MONKEYS ARE part of the tradition of art. They stand for low and base behaviour in humanity. They are creatures with negative connotations. Carroll cites Janson's observation that "The monkey had a central place in the moralistic imagery in the 16th century".³⁷ Bruegel's painting from 1562 shows a considerable advance in his power of composition over the encyclopaedic works of two years before. The loose spiral traced from the restraining ring by the chains, the monkeys and the arched opening in which they sit, ensures the whole image interlocks. We are engaged in a very different way from the earlier paintings where we stand apart, mere observers.

The focus on a pair of captive monkeys is very unusual. It is the chains at the centre that mark out his monkey image as different – and the hazelnuts that hold the key. The monkeys in *Dulle Griet* are imprisoned but no chains are in evidence; the monkey in *The Adoration of the Magi* (unsigned, undated and very damaged, this painting is generally accepted as not being by Bruegel, but a copy based on a lost composition) is not even imprisoned but happily

sitting on someone's shoulder.³⁸ Stechow sees Bruegel's image connected to one by Dürer, yet commentators endlessly write how rarely Bruegel reuses his own imagery let alone borrows an idea or even a figure from other artists.³⁹ So whether the monkeys relate to prints by Israel van Meckenem and in turn Pisanello,⁴⁰ to Frantz Brunn or Vogtherr the Elder, or anyone else, is not our interest here. Neither is their questionable identification as red-headed colobus monkeys, nor the city's representation of Antwerp (likely but not certain).

What we are looking at is a motif for human folly⁴¹ set before a generic Netherlandish port⁴² at a time of economic misery, failed harvests, social unrest, religious dispute, iconoclasm, and the inquisition. Apes were generally understood as symbols representing the Devil, and the Anti-Christ, but exotic creatures such as these were traded in Antwerp and popular with collectors such as Bruegel's patron, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, Cardinal Granvelle. The mutual incomprehension of the most centralised monarchy in Europe and the Spanish Netherlands was moving inexorably to war. Economic misery was about to be overtaken by political crisis.

Here we have arrived at one of the intersections of art and history. "The argument against political meaning in Bruegel's work is based on the well-known fact that Cardinal Granvelle and Philip II acquired a number of his paintings; that this would not have been the case if they suspected him of subversion."⁴³ It has been suggested that the picture is a commentary on Christian attitudes to material wealth, a view supported "from literature to prints to pageantry";⁴⁴ – and "to ape" means to emulate, so if monkeys copy man why should man not copy God?⁴⁵ It could also be a play on the words *singerie* (a painting depicting monkeys taking human roles and attitudes) and *seigneurie* (a feudal tenure),⁴⁶ or simply Bruegel's despair at being forced to leave Antwerp for Brussels by his future father-in-law to be. A piece of moral instruction, a religious statement, a comment on a personal predicament, whatever else it is, it is political.

This is a very small painting, it measures just 20x23cm. It is completely out of keeping with what went before and what came after. It marks the point when Bruegel moved from symbolic, pictorial, proverbial truths – theatrical scenes set in urban arenas – to the political, religious and economic upheaval of the times. It is an emotionally powerful, highly personal piece. It was not commissioned, it was a personal statement for a small audience, a discussion piece, an incongruous juxtaposition implying a pictorial rebus for Bruegel's well-educated circle, one that must be considered in relationship to its time. Carroll is on thin ground when she suggests that a political reading depends on "the assumption that nationalism was of paramount concern".⁴⁷ "Religious and moral issues were dominant" as she writes, but they were inextricably linked with political events. As such it marks a transition in Bruegel's work, a moral allegory certainly, but one that sets his audience up for what was to follow.⁴⁸

Stechow quotes the proverb "to go to court for the sake of a hazelnut";⁴⁹ the nuts could also be seen as making the point that something was a "hard nut to crack". The Low Countries were a hard nut for Spain to crack. As stated in the previous chapter, 'the greatest military machine of all was overwhelmed by the spiralling costs of war, Spain could not save itself or its Habsburg partner, and the logistics of supporting an army in the Low Countries became insuperable'.

Hazelnuts came from Spain. As for those chains: "Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains."⁵⁰ How free are we to break free? The chains are attached to something deep inside human nature, not "mind-forged manacles" brought upon themselves; they are not imprisoned within themselves, but they are what we are.⁵¹ This image "contrasts bondage with freedom, subsistence with prosperity" – some choice.⁵²



154 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Two Monkeys* Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie



155 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*
Brussels, KMSK/MRBAB



156 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Dulle Griet*
Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh



157 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Triumph of Death*
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Counterparts

HAVING COMPLETED one set of three paintings, *Netherlandish Proverbs*, and *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* both from 1559, and *Children's Games* from 1560, Bruegel painted another in 1561-62: *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* or *The Archangel Michael Slaying the Apocalyptic Dragon*, *Dulle Griet* or *Mad Meg*, and *The Triumph of Death*.⁵³ All three panels are again the same overall size. Whether they are meant to correspond and constitute a set of three or not is debatable. Marijnissen speculated that the three paintings from 1562 were indeed made as counterparts. We agree. The link is provided by the Apocalypse. Marijnissen has cautioned us: "Before inventing scholarly explanations of subjects which today suggest a rebus or code message, we should ask whether the solution is not actually much simpler than we think".⁵⁴

Precisely. But, and it is a big but, notwithstanding the "predilection of his age for symbolism and allegory",⁵⁵ the eulogy of Ortelius that Bruegel 'depicted many things that cannot be depicted', the search for hidden truths, and the idea that this artist was deliberately obscure and cryptic, considering the dangers inherent in being openly critical, a degree of circumspection is only to be expected. Bruegel's working life had reached a turning point. The medium in which he primarily worked changed, his signature changed, and his imagery changed from social attitudes and emotions, contemporary emblems, references to folklore and customs, sayings and proverbs based on literary sources both classical⁵⁶ and vernacular,⁵⁷ produced as a grand encyclopaedic *mélange* for a sophisticated urban elite audience, to work that confronted the ideological struggle of the times, and the personal predicaments that presented. With these three works, here we also have Bruegel's major excursion into the world of Jheronimus Bosch. The first, the *Rebel Angels*, was at one time attributed to Bosch, the formal language of the second, *Dulle Griet*, is distinctly reminiscent of Bosch and the third, the *Triumph of Death*, has all the apocalyptic power of Bosch – and more; a landscape of death, one where the promise of redemption and resurrection is absent.

God is nowhere to be seen.

*Dulle Griet*⁵⁸

BERTOLT BRECHT thought her beautiful, "the Fury defending her pathetic household goods with the sword. The world at the end of its tether".⁵⁹ Gibson saw a wild-eyed crone leading the ravaging horde, and Karel van Mander's haunting phrase had her "looting at the mouth of Hell", far from his characterisation of Bruegel as "a supremely comic artist".⁶⁰ The spirit of the painting is contained in two proverbs: "One woman makes a din, two women a lot of trouble, three an annual market, four a quarrel, five an army, and against six the Devil himself has no weapon" and "she could plunder even in front of hell and remain unscathed".⁶¹

Around this mythic figure a world peopled by monsters is consumed by fire and war. Hell and earth are merging beneath a blazing red sky in one infernal landscape. The mouth of Hell is a scaly leviathan face mutating out of a hillside, gaping jaws crammed with sinners. We are in the "shape-shifting, hallucinatory world of Bosch".⁶² Griet charges forward, a harridan with hair streaming out from under her helmet, a breastplate over her dress, leading an army of women knocking the damned out of way, looting homes, ransacking the ruined land, and defying the army. Armies pillaged as a matter of routine in Europe in the 16th century. It was an acknowledged way for soldiers to be paid. If a city under siege did not surrender it could expect to be sacked. Three days was the allotted time to loot, pillage and, led here by their hero the old hag Griet, an anti-hero, energetic, courageous, the tragicomic spirit of survival, even Satan cannot control the mob laying waste to the city.

She would be the ideal model for *Mother Courage*, an essentially courageous, resilient, indomitable, and inspiring symbol of humanity's ability to continue after all that has

happened, if it can find the courage.⁶³ She is a survivor. An irresistible force who, like Griet, characterised her times. She is not the comic creation that Gibson thinks Bruegel forged from “shopworn proverbs”.⁶⁴ Neither is it really credible that in the frantic urgency of Meg striding across towards the jaws of Hell we see “Fortune impersonating Spanish tyranny and wealth”.⁶⁵ However, events and conditions in Antwerp and the activity by seditious rebels in the Low Countries at the time may well be reflected in the picture, especially seen with topical hints of the city’s civic imagery – both the young maid of Antwerp and the Antwerp Giant that had appeared one in front of the other in the Antwerp *Ommegang* of 1561.⁶⁶ Sullivan has pointed to the perversion “of these two basic images of civic pride into the greedy and violent old bacchante” and the implications for an abused culture that fostered a spirit of informing on ones neighbours with all the appalling consequences that inevitably ensued. It must have been a little like life in the DDR.

Seeing the painting at first hand, its heroine is threatening. Dulle meant angry, mad or foolish, Griet was a variant of Margot, Magrite, and Greta. Griet and Meg were also nicknames for big guns of the period. A century before Bruegel a huge cannon manufactured in Ghent was known as Dulle Griet.⁶⁷ Is Bruegel making fun of noisy aggressive women, the surprising degree of freedom and independence enjoyed by Netherlandish women,⁶⁸ a comment on the number of sovereigns and regents around 1560 who were women,⁶⁹ or a prophesy about the folly of the Church and the greed of the rebels leading to civil war? Moderation was not to be the order of the day. The times were fanatical, and the acute political and religious strife is yet again reflected in the pessimism and the independence of Bruegel’s point of view.

While the image combines elements of wrath, avarice, envy, and gluttony, all of which have been put forward as explanations for this satire on sin, it is anger that really drives this painting. The artist’s drawings and engravings of the vices have been plundered for their motifs, but it is *Ira* that mostly corresponds and holds the key.⁷⁰ Both images are dominated by a striding giant, both characters wear helmets, breastplates and one gauntlet, both picture the entrance to Hell on the left behind a tree, both include a ship with a globe,⁷¹ etc., but the painting is not simply a new version of the print.⁷² Just as the origins of some of his earlier paintings have been attributed to various texts and literary sources, proverbs and scripture, so it has been suggested is *Dulle Griet*.⁷³ For example, the idea that Bruegel “must have had the *Inferno* before him to produce his re-embodiment of Dante’s Upper Hell” makes each piece of this episodic image capable of being read, “for what it plainly shows”, with reference to the *Commedia*. If this were the case then Bruegel has been very free with his use of Dante’s adventure story. Unfortunately, this is the very opposite of what Bruegel was all about. He is anything but open and clear. As with *The Two Monkeys*, *Dulle Griet* “would have met Erasmus’s standard for effective allegory” in that it exercised “the minds of the pious” sufficiently to satisfy “the humanist’s liking for complexity, obscurity and moral significance”.⁷⁴

Complexity and obscurity were a defence against accusations of heresy or even simple criticism of the Church in the Low Countries that at the time could lead to execution. The dangers of life in Antwerp were brought into sharp focus for Bruegel at this time by the need for his friend Christopher Plantin to leave the city when he was accused of printing heretical books.⁷⁵ Griet may transcend literal interpretation but she does embody both the characteristics of an allegorical Xanthippe and Erasmian Folly, a hypocritical Christian at war for anything but a ‘just’ cause.

The painting is a grand visual metaphor. It is built up like a medieval sermon or the Adages of Erasmus, example piled on example, drawing on various authors, the classics, the Bible, popular stories, and legends.⁷⁶ In this case the vice of anger is extended to what was considered its extreme form, madness. Erasmus had edited Seneca, whose *On Anger* made the connection. “All the authors that are likely sources for Bruegel’s ideas and imagery in *Dulle*



158 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Sloth* Vienna, Albertina



159 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Wrath* Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi



160 Engraving after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Pride*



161 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Avarice* London, British Museum



162 Engraving after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Gluttony*



163 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Envy* Switzerland, private collection



164 Engraving after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Lust*



165 Engraving after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Faith*, one of *Seven Virtues*

Griet – Seneca, Horace, Erasmus, Prudentius and Virgil – sold well in this period and would have been familiar to a humanist audience.”⁷⁷ To Erasmus war was anger and his influence was all-pervasive.

Echoes of Bosch

BRUEGEL'S SERIES of *Seven Deadly Sins* was completed in 1558. It is entirely in the style of Jheronimus Bosch. (In contrast, the artist's *Virtues* completed two years later display none of the Boschian phantasmagoria so evident in the *Sins*, and point more to salvation through scripture rather than observance of the sacraments. The two series are linked by *The Last Judgement* executed in 1558, and connected to an image from 1561 *The Descent of Christ into Limbo*.) It has always been assumed that Bruegel used a Boschian idiom for the *Sins* because it was more commercially viable. It may also be because the style of Bosch was readily associated with the world of sin or it may have been a reflection of the fact that his beliefs really were developing, if not actually changing. The deliberate adoption of a style for either a commercial purpose or interpretation of the image is a new and intriguing concept. Whatever the reason, the large central figure of *Ira* complements the other six designs, all of which feature personification of a sin surrounded by further detailed scenes of depravity in a never-ending sequence, in other words reminiscent of Bosch. The visual echoes are everywhere.⁷⁸ The inversion of scale, the hybrid creatures, amphibians, crustaceans, lizards, they are all there intertwined.

In 1556 Bruegel executed the drawings that were the basis of the *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* engraving that was signed 'Hieronymus Bos/inuentor', and *The Temptation of St Anthony*.⁷⁹ They both demonstrate the disciplined style of draughtsmanship he developed for engravers to follow. They are also inspired by, and derived from Bosch to the point of plagiarising his predecessor's visual language. By emulating the bestial and the infernal aspects of Bosch's imagery at this time, it implies that the publisher certainly considered their "fearful bite" still relevant to his market, something not everyone agrees with today.⁸⁰ The publisher, Hieronymus Cock, thought Bosch worth resurrecting.

Thus Bruegel was transformed into the 'second Bosch', so-called by Lodovico Guicciardini and the soubriquet stuck.⁸¹ Around this time Hieronymus Cock also published an anonymous etching based on a drawing by Alaert Duhamel that was also inscribed 'bosche'.⁸² Bruegel borrowed liberally from this image, *Elephant at War*, as well as from Bosch himself in preparing the designs for his *Seven Deadly Sins*, a move that led Serebrennikov to wonder if there would have even been a *Dulle Griet* without Hieronymus Cock.⁸³ What is clear, as Manfred Sellink has pointed out, is just how much of a stern moralist the artist was: "Bruegel's frightening, diabolical images offer evidence of the hellish everlasting life awaiting us after the Last Judgement and at the same time confront us with the monstrous consequences of our sins during life on earth, namely the loss of dignity and spiritual purity."⁸⁴ *The Last Judgement* is derived from the Apocalypse of St John.⁸⁵ It shows the separation of the virtuous from sinners in a conscious visual echo of Bosch. In 1558 it was a topical subject. However, Bruegel's image is medieval, reflecting the Catholic concept of God sitting in judgement rather than the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and, in this case, really is a Last Judgement.

The Descent of Christ into Limbo is generally dated 1561 (the date is clearly written later and by another hand) but could probably be from several years earlier when considering the style and the Bosch-type imagery.⁸⁶ It takes its reference from a source used by Dante, who must have relished its dramatic intensity, the Gospel of Nicodemus or Acti Pilati from the Deutero-Canonical books known by Protestants as the Apocrypha.⁸⁷ The drawing unusually locates Christ in a luminous bubble similar to a painting of the same title attributed to Jan Mandijn (and sometimes also attributed to Herri Met de Bles) that may have been executed any time during the previous 30 years.⁸⁸ (The quotation from Psalm 27 that appears at the foot is

a strange choice as it relates to the return of the Ark, is sometimes applied to the ascension of Christ to Heaven, 'or into the heart's of his people', and has no specific relevance here.)⁸⁹

Two more drawings should be mentioned: *The Damned* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*.⁹⁰ The first has been dated anywhere between c1450 and a hundred years later, the second c1450 and fifty years later. They are both problematic and not firmly attributed to anyone, although Fritz Koreny has argued that on grounds of technique, style and content they should be assigned to the circle of Dieric Bouts.⁹¹ In 1958 Winkler proposed Bruegel, a view later endorsed by various scholars, most recently Matthijs IJssink.⁹² It is a creative variation on Bouts that was clearly an inspiration to the artist, whoever that may be, rather than a direct copy. In fact it could be "a new Bouts, Boschified, by Bruegel" as IJssink called it, identifying elements of drawings such as the *Fall of the Magician Hermogenes* (1564), the *Descent of Christ into Limbo* (c1561), and *Luxuria* (1557) together with details of the paintings *Dulle Griet* and the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* that not only point to Bruegel as "a strong candidate" for the artist, but make us consider just how this drawing might have been viewed in the 16th century, and questions of *imitation* and *aemulatio* to which we must return later.⁹³

166 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Temptation of St Anthony*
Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum



167 Etching based on a drawing by Aaert Duhamel *Elephant at War*



168 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Last Judgement*
Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina



169 Engraving by Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel
The Descent of Christ into Limbo

Netherlands, nether world: *The Triumph of Death*

"I know that thou wilt deliver me to death, where a house is appointed for every one that liveth" Job⁹⁴

IN ABOUT 1562, Bruegel painted a scene from the ultimate war.⁹⁵ *The Triumph of Death* is unmistakably a war painting, a history painting. In a panoramic landscape, Death's army rages, innumerable, invincible. Thousands of skeletons mass behind coffin-shields under the banner of death. As a skeleton beats the war drums, they deploy new technologies including a giant box raised by a lever into which men and women are savagely shoved. Some fight back, but these isolated acts of courage have no significance. It is a reminder of the never-ending truckloads of victims arriving at the railway sidings at Auschwitz with its specially extended platform.

Another army of death approaches in a bony column; people are executed on the hilltops by skeletons swinging mighty swords, their bodies displayed on circular raised platforms. There are ships burning in the distance, a red glow of horror beyond the horizon: the same terrible scenes are taking place everywhere in the world, "fusing the medieval with the spirit of the Renaissance", it is demoralisingly prophetic, a picture to drive its audience to abandon hope.⁹⁶ Even admirers are repelled. We could not be more unsettled. We might as well be looking into the soiled interior of a modern mind as into an artist's half a millennium ago. Rather the hordes of nameless fears that took shape in his mind have an inner legitimacy which their demonic forms merely serve. Another terrible century and its horrors transmuted into art, a lonely witness to monstrosity.⁹⁷

It is impossible to miss the taste of history in this picture. The unstoppable army of skeletons has something acutely satirical about it; this is what war is like. In its very fantasy and excess, Bruegel's painting reveals truths never officially acknowledged about the way the world is. Bruegel is a realist – even a social realist. This is why his art appealed to socialist writers such as WH Auden and Bertolt Brecht. He takes the mad, foolish, impossible fantastic realm mapped by Bosch and demonstrates, with brutal peasant humour, that it is not so far after all from the everyday cruelties, injustices and stupidities we accept as natural. Bosch was not mad, Bruegel says - he was a prophet. You do not need to close your eyes to see monstrosities. They are all around us.

Catholicism was no longer a page in Aquinas. It was closer now to death in the afternoon. Money, war, religion – the insanities that disorder Bruegel's world are all too recognisable. Bosch would give concrete and tangible shape to the fears that haunted the minds of the Middle Ages at the very last moment when old ideas were still plausible. He could pile horror upon horror, fires, torments, demons, plagues and death to an audience that believed it all. Bosch was an architect of the unreal, Bruegel a historian of the horrors we know. With their grinning skeletons, severed limbs and delirious visions, Bosch and Bruegel had a lot in common. But only one of them both experienced and saw the truth behind the nightmare.

Bruegel was involved. He participated. And then he painted.

The Fall of the Rebel Angels, Dulle Griet, The Triumph of Death. If these paintings are a set of three, we fall out of Heaven with the angels already having taken the form of monsters, arrive in Hell where a group of militant housewives are attacking the devils, and end in an apocalyptic wasteland of death. This panoramic vision of the afterlife is so potent, haunting and grotesque, so terrifying, so terminal, so urgent that it presses against the door of our time and can be bracketed with Goya, Géricault, and Picasso as timeless. Bruegel's pandemonium of Boschian hybrids take us right into the landscape of hysteria, evil, cruelty and irrationality of northern Europe of the 16th century with its pogroms, religious wars, flagellants and messiahs proclaiming the Millennium's imminent arrival.



170 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Triumph of Death* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado



171 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Suicide of Saul in the Battle against the Philistines at Gilboa* Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

We are there with a man seemingly without faith in anything but death. Faced with such savage disgust at barbarity, one could forget one's faith and still be faithful only if there was a possibility of salvation. One could remember the horrors and be faithless: unless; the only hope is that death is not the end. Is there something to hope for, is there triumph in death? Death itself has become a symbol of hopelessness, the means by which God destroys hope. Conjuring hope when apparently faced with hopelessness is the prospect facing Bruegel.

We will not find it here – or can we?⁹⁸

The power of this moral allegorist to illustrate the cumulative despair this all created is unmatched. It is political art at its most powerful and timeless, like Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*.⁹⁹ True believers could triumph over death if they were on the right side in the confrontation between vice and virtue. Faith and virtue will be rewarded, without which there is no hope. The despair and hopelessness of *The Triumph of Death* is a sure sign that there will be no paradise on earth and that evil may triumph in the end. The earth has yielded up its dead, the end of the world is heralded, the battle has been lost, death is the ultimate victor, war itself is indicted at the court of life. The Christian promise of resurrection and redemption has totally disappeared.

Art usually founders before the fact. Not here. This does not fit into the genre of history painting, an image of important events real and imagined. Documentary evidence of brutality is manipulative, easy. Bruegel's present drifts into all our futures, suggesting the inescapable abstraction of modern violence. It has shocking immediacy and a timeless ripple of implication. Violence co-exists alongside contemplation. You cannot contain its meanings, just as you cannot finally know why men do what they do. Berger even thought it presaged the holocaust.¹⁰⁰

It is just as Milton described the illumination of Hell, "... As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames / No light; but rather darkness visible / Served only to discover sights of woe, / Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace / And rest can never dwell, hope never comes / That comes to all, but torture without end..."¹⁰¹

Whilst each of this triumvirate have many sources for their inspiration, the one that links them is the Apocalypse: chapter 12 for *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, chapters 8 and 9 for *Dulle Griet* (the seventh seal is opened, the earth is "ravaged by evil, while anger, greed, licentiousness, and ruin are rampant")¹⁰² connecting with the final instalment in *The Triumph of Death* where armies of the dead lay siege to the living in a hellish apocalyptic end of everything – a last judgement without judgement, without choice. A number of specific deaths seemed to signal "universal calamity".¹⁰³ If God has all the power – 'Why' demands Bruegel? He echoes Job asking: Why, why, why, why, why?¹⁰⁴ They both know God has a hidden purpose but no matter how many times the prophet asks the question, there is no reply.¹⁰⁵ God has the answers, our difficulty is that He does not have to reply now.

God is silent.

Unless. If there is a possibility of salvation perhaps we can find some hope in the triumph of death after all? Who gave it that title? In the triumph there must be something? And if there is hope to be found, something everyone writing about this painting denies, then we have a parallel with the 'ever pessimistic' Bosch and the question of the Particular and Last Judgements, indications that in the depths of despair there is cause for optimism, even if it is only in the life to come. Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, who held to 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' would have understood such conviction, that even in difficult times there are good things to be done, a conviction to be shared by believer and non-believer alike.¹⁰⁶ But it still begs the question: will "death be swallowed up in victory" – what will be the manner of our resurrection?¹⁰⁷

Faced with the Devil, Bruegel, like Job, displays a provocative theodicy in attempting to find vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil: undeserved evil is morally necessary in order to create the possibility of completely selfless love. The details

of that justification will be revealed at the Day of Judgement. The ambiguous end to Job (he is blessed but his moral trials continue) leaves the reader of the book and of Bruegel, not knowing where he or she stands. As we look into an unsparing vision of eternal peril, we are surely haunted by the demand for justice, provoked into passing judgement, as we stand condemned in the harshest judgement for making the wrong choices. There is 'no reason' in Job that merits the amount of evil that overtakes him, just as the sheer scale of the bestiality in Bruegel is incomprehensible.¹⁰⁸ Is the painting a Last Judgement? "For the wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹⁰⁹ The picture does not imply there is anything after death, nor does it purport to look beyond death, images of an afterlife are absent. But as the Book of Job puts God on trial, so Bruegel's battlefield scene of inexorable conflict with its anticipated horror of warfare ahead, brutalised lives, and crushed hopes, asks questions about the impending military menace from the gathering storm, the relentless advance of its new professional armies, their ranks of death drilled with martial precision, and any hope of peace on earth fast disappearing, and mankind itself on trial. Rebellion against God will result in spiritual death at the hands of the massed armies of Satan. Undated, ambiguous, yet certainly spiritual, infused with the medieval visual culture of death, the king in the lower left hand corner is forced to contemplate an hourglass with the sands fast running out for a world whose time was up. "Looking at this painting might cause one to lose his faith."¹¹⁰ For Bruegel, it is precisely in contemplating death that faith might grow stronger and receive a new light. He might even appreciate Simone Weil's joke that "God's love always makes Jobs out of us."

THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH was produced within the same period as two drawings made for prints, the aforementioned *The Last Judgement* and *The Descent of Christ into Limbo*, both of which feature hellish scenes redolent of the scene in *Griet*. They are all complementary. And the style, techniques and colours of the three paintings are as one, and they all have the same elevated panoramic viewpoint. All of them reveal a profound debt to Bosch, use imagery derived from Bosch, and were possibly at some stage passed off as by him; all of them are medieval in concept, none of them display the outlook of a modern man, their popularity bolstered at the time of production by the religious debates that were raging. The pictures look back to a time when the end of the world was confidently expected, a disintegrating age when Satan was triumphant. The self-conviction that mankind could master the world in which it lived, the optimism that a new era of exploration might unravel the secrets of God's universe, a sense of liberation from the past, challenging new ideas and reform might all be in the air, printing had broken the Church's monopoly on holy writ, the old world had set sail around the globe to discover the new – but the old world lived on in the paintings of Pieter Bruegel.

The Triumph of Death is a huge development away from the sources usually mentioned in relation to this panel: the frescoes in the Palazzo Scalfani in Palermo, and the Campo Santo in Pisa, engravings by Dürer, Holbein woodcuts, Giulio Clovio miniatures, medieval *danse macabres*, a mosaic of references and analogies that has been stretched even further to include Greek mythology.¹¹¹

Probably painted in the same year as the *Triumph of Death*, was another painting equally full of military menace, and where the drama is unresolved, *The Suicide of Saul in the Battle against the Philistines at Gilboa*, one of the few paintings by Bruegel that illustrate an episode from the Old Testament.¹¹² A popular subject for late-medieval miniatures, perhaps due to the fact that Saul turned to witchcraft for divination on the eve of the battle for Mount Gilboa, by the 16th century it was an unusual choice. Saul's death was interpreted as a punishment for pride (it was among the proud that Dante met Saul in the *Purgatorio*¹¹³) but this picture may well also demonstrate the struggle between good and evil as a metaphor for religious dissent, that could possibly be an indirect criticism of tyranny, even "a veiled political commentary

against monarchy itself",¹¹⁴ in displaying the artist's obsession that year with soldiers.¹¹⁵ They are there again at the Resurrection. *The Resurrection of Christ* is a drawing that has been poorly conserved and sadly suffered as a result.¹¹⁶ It shows the soldiers' shock, distress, and lack of comprehension at the appearance of an angel ("the guards were struck with terror") at the scene of Christ's Resurrection, the final proof that Jesus was the Son of God, gave his life for humanity and returned to Heaven to await his Second Coming at the Day of Judgement.

Perhaps it is only when we accept that we will die that we can fully accept how alive we are right now. Death brings perspective, then, it brings us back to life. *The Triumph of Death* asks us how, now, will we live? "Being here is so much."¹¹⁷ Whether you believe death is the end, or, we must assume, like Bruegel, that it is only the beginning, this is not about the time he had left, but the time he had now. To believe in the resurrection was to build your life around a promise and let your identity be shaped by it, and why, when you could not see things clearly, and felt lost, as Bruegel surely did here, you had to dig deep and live by that promise. In a defining moment in John's Gospel, Jesus says that 'the truth will set you free'. It is wrapped around by events that show how difficult it can be to face the truth, and a challenging thing to encounter, it is not an easy religious promise. His truth exposes hypocrisy, human weakness, and the pervasiveness of rebellion against God's purposes. It leads to hope and resurrection, but only through controversy and crucifixion. Hope defeats fear. Bruegel paints both his truth and fears.

The Cross was a symbol of justice that was to be rendered as a consequence of every sin and wrong-doing. Actions always have consequences. Bruegel is showing that this horror will have consequences. A man staggering up the road to Golgotha was with us now. God was to be found deep in the rocky soil of Netherlandish lives. The story for them was not a myth, it was hard, historical fact, and one which, for believers, carried a great truth, of God and themselves: the truth that, for eternity, love was stronger than death.

If Bruegel's audience believed that Christ had broken the back of evil through His death and resurrection, it is quite clear that it would not be finally overcome until He came again in glory. The end was not the end. It was the goal, the end of a process, the ultimate disclosure. Yet difficult as it was, what Bruegel and his audience had to accept was that whilst the author of undeserved evil in the world God had a duty to answer all their questions, God did not have a duty to give the answers right now.

The despair and hopelessness of *The Triumph of Death* is a sure sign that there will be no paradise on the 'immensity of the battlefield' on earth, and that evil may triumph in the end.¹¹⁸ Whether Bruegel considered himself an 'ambassador for Christ' this picture can be read as a strong Christian statement.¹¹⁹ Surely the message is that helplessness does not necessarily mean hopelessness. Hope was the key virtue, despair a terrible sin. Pain can be borne, finding strength in weakness is what St Paul called it. He also wrote that the hidden meaning of history was now revealed to be "Christ in you the hope of glory".¹²⁰ It was the consummation of this hope that he looked for when, as he put it, God would be "all in all".¹²¹

Arguably, this was Bruegel's moment. To look at, something of the 16th century settles on you, like dust. Like all great art this picture transports us to another world, but maybe to one that is not that far away. Bruegel does not merely evoke a world of death, sadistic folly and barbaric logic, he renders it whole and alive, the bestial sadism of mankind a continuing story. Where is the intersection of fear, denial, calculation, conscience and contempt? Has Bruegel found it? What was it like to watch your neighbours being marched off towards the railway station to board a non-stop train to extinction? How did your glass of schnapps taste that night? How effectively did it wash down the shame? As Hannah Arendt observed: "Under conditions of terror, most people will comply but some people will not... Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation." Those who fight back redeem us all. But in a world of sleaze, suspicion, desperation

and murder, one where disobedience equalled death, would we have behaved any differently?

We should ask ourselves: would I have discovered within myself the moral stature of decency, enough to defy the butchers, to protest the exodus; would I have fought back?

I hope so – but in truth, I only hope so.

This painting makes me think of a lot of things, and first of those is my father's father who fought in the trenches of Flanders. Watching men stepping off the duckboards and drowning in mud, seeing one's comrades blown to pieces, toasted with a flamethrower, crushed beneath the tracks of a tank changes one's point of view about a lot of things.¹²² In this hetacomb men vanished, in clouds of poison gas, hails of steel splinters and great lakes of sucking sod. Along the barbed wire they lay dead in lines like so much mown-down corn. After a while he had seen too much. You could not pretend that you did not see things. They were always there on the insides of your eyelids when you went to sleep at night. And you tell yourself that you would rather not see any more. Not if you can help it. Taking orders once made those men the victims of 'historical value judgements', and appear just as historic today as the notion of company loyalty. "This continual sight of agonizing humanity drifting aimlessly like frightened cattle becomes one of the worst of daylight nightmares."¹²³

The nature of war changed. Slowly. Eras do eventually end. "The cut and thrust of old-style warfare, the beguiling panoply of flashing swords, the glittering lances, of flying pennants, the sound of drums and bugles, the hammer of hooves, the dash and glory of the charge – all these were not entirely dead, but they had begun their dying. So too had feudal concepts of service and duty, for so long bred to the bone... A grim awareness began to dawn that this war would be won by grit and not by glory."¹²⁴ It was 1914. How are the valiant fallen? "O death, where is thy victory?"¹²⁵

When the poet Edward Thomas went off to fight in the First World War a friend asked him what he was fighting for. He picked up some soil, and said "this".



172 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Resurrection of Christ*
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen



173 Engraving by Philips Galle, after Pieter Bruegel
the Elder *The Resurrection of Christ*

Entr'acte **Jake and Dinos Chapman** All the hells of theological imagination

THE TWENTIETH century is the one in which we rediscovered evil. I visited Auschwitz one day in 1972. Then there was no introductory film, no guided tour, no visitor centre and no café. Holocaust tourism had not taken hold. There were no coaches and no Warsaw-Krakow-Auschwitz t-shirts.¹²⁶ It was not then a major destination. Now, around one and half million people visit Auschwitz every year. Today, packed with tourists it must seem faintly unreal, silent contemplation a luxury. All those years ago it was also unreal, a place where one's imagination gave up; the sheer efficiency of this factory of death overwhelming. Different permutations of cruelty and sadism waited around every corner, but it was the efficiency that finally defeated me. Nothing was so worthless that they would not throw it away, except human life.

It was not the numbers of people killed; where mass murder is an industry numbers become incomprehensible. If the crematorium could not incinerate the bodies quickly enough, the mathematics become defeating. But entering a low brick building to be confronted with a glass wall running the length of the barrack behind which is nothing but human hair is unforgettable. The next building contained nothing but spectacles, the next one clothing, the next one suitcases, the next artificial limbs, and then – just teeth. Another building, another glass wall, and one was confronted by nothing but children's shoes. And so it went on. No graphics, no captions, no charts, no photographs, no commentary on an audio guide, but a physical legacy that was truly awful. The sterilization ward, the execution wall, the torture cells, the showers, the ovens, I forget. But those glazed corridors, evidence of a systematic fervour to destroy life; once you began walking around it became impossible to look away. The visit changed my life. This was not a museum it was a mirror of humanity, and one that was almost impossible to look at.

It was said that one only had to stick a shovel into the vast, flat landscape around Oswiecim to turn up human remains. It probably is still the case. Scratch the topsoil and you will find splinters of bone, just buried, not by a dog, but by history. The platform extension at the railway station is still there, the one built in that same name of efficiency to shorten the walk to the camp, and speed up the killing. I arrived and left by train, my day in hell. Now this hell is on the tourist to-do lists, the hotels of Kraków just an hour away. I doubt all these visitors comprehend what they are getting in to; if they can possibly be ready for such a desperate place, a place where the dignity, mystery and unique characteristics of individuals were just ironed out.

Out of this valley of despair should come hope. Can we ever be confident that we have discovered a way out of the valley of death or the shadow of Auschwitz? T-shirt anyone? Who's for a beer? "Our deeds do not disappear into the black hole of time but are recorded somewhere and judged."¹²⁷ We all carry the burden, and the opportunity of moral responsibility. What of the mirror of the artist? The Northern Renaissance gave us the notion of the self-conscious artist, and a new understanding of their presence in art and the world. What does today's artist produce when faced with mass murder? When he tries to remember?

The Chapmans are two brothers who like to shock and awe their audience, the naughty boys of the nineties Brit art scene¹²⁸ who broke one of art's ultimate taboos by systematically defacing a mint condition set of prints,¹²⁹ the *Los Desastres de la Guerra*¹³⁰ by Goya in 2003, a template for the nightmares of war artists ever since, and a work Picasso had turned to when he was planning Guernica. In 2008 the brothers decided to give Hitler the 'Chapman treatment'. Roberta Smith in the *New York Times* called them British masters of transgressive obnoxiousness.¹³¹

Pictures that change the way we look at things, the shock of the new as Hughes called it, that make us respond to an image by laughing, crying, thinking, or being sick, was what I was taught

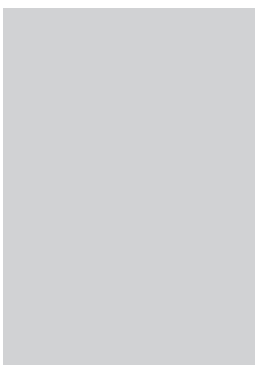
at school that art was all about. If you just walked past it, it was like wallpaper, and therefore less than worthless. The collision of ideas can produce a reaction that an old master, untouched, may not. Whether the Chapmans are nasty, psychotic, pessimistic, diabolic or simply boring, makes them not so much a travesty, perhaps more an extension of our (and Goya's) despair. Just who the Chapmans want to shock and what their real target is has never been made clear.

Being shocking has become one of the most prized qualities in the visual arts – a battle I always thought it had fought and won over a century ago. Even 50 years ago it was almost impossible for an artist to really shock anyone. Long before music, literature and theatre kicked convention and established mores regarding decency, artists had beaten those that would censor their work. Yet the urge to shock and be shocked has become fashionable and all too frequently we are faced with another exhibition of rotting meat, misplaced genitalia and rubbish.¹³² Rubbish or *Künstlerscheisse*?

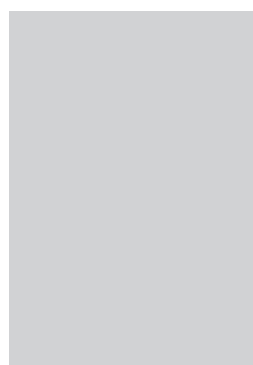
In 1998-2000 Jake and Dinos Chapman made a piece they called *Hell*, a tableau in which thousands of toy second world war German soldiers committed unspeakable acts of violence, mutilating and killing each other and themselves in a psychotic Nazi orgy, and had it interpreted as a profound comment on the Holocaust. Art? An art which dare not speak its name – or two fingers to the rest of us? The piece acquired almost mythical status, was famously bought by Charles Saatchi for £500,000 and then famously destroyed in the same fire in east London that destroyed Tracey Emin's tent. The irony of *Hell* burning was lost on no one. But then the Chapmans decided to recreate it. *Fucking Hell* is the deliberately offensive and explicit new title – an expletive, not a real title at all.¹³³ They hoped that this would be people's reaction on seeing the piece, a Boschian diorama, and that it was far "more precise and nasty" than the original. It was included in a show called *If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy We Would Be* drawing on the 'joke' that the Second World War and the Holocaust might not have happened



174, 175, 176 Jake and Dinos Chapman *Insult to Injury* 2003. Francisco de Goya 'Disasters of War'. Three of eighty etchings reworked and improved. Each 37x47cm (framed) Paper size 28.3x38.1cm © Jake and Dinos Chapman Photo: Stephen White. Courtesy White Cube



178, 179 Jake and Dinos Chapman *Fucking Hell* 2008 Fibreglass, plastic and mixed media in nine vitrines 215x128.7x249.8cm Central vitrine 215.4x128x128cm © Jake and Dinos Chapman. Photos: Hugo Glendinning. Courtesy White Cube



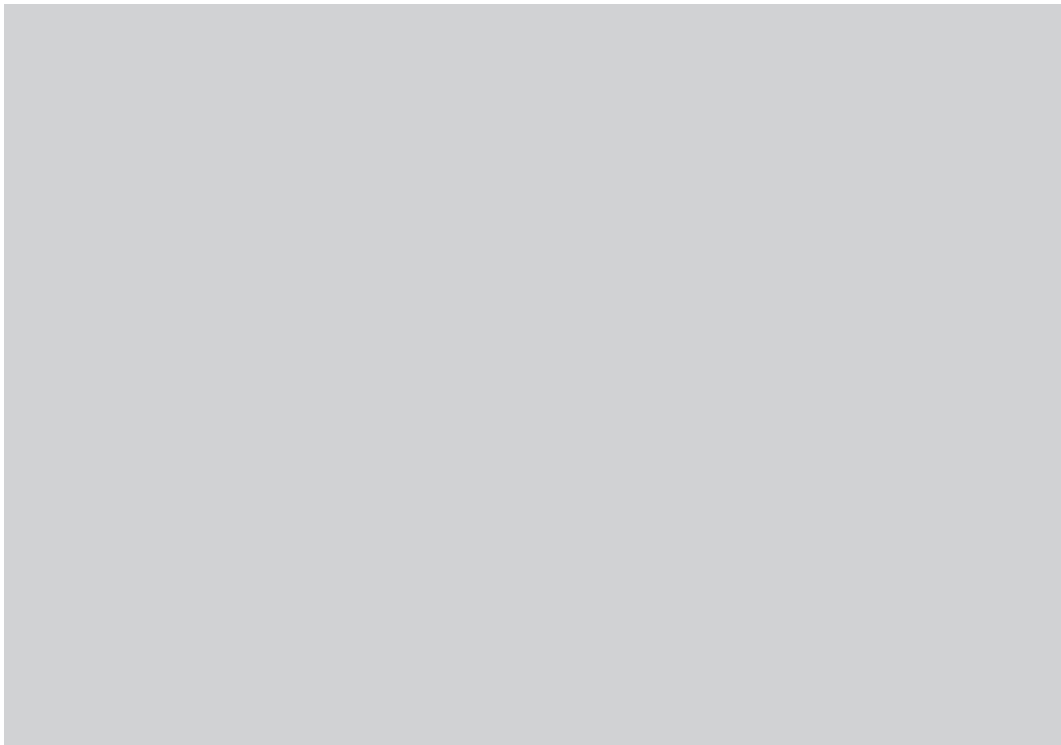
180 Jake and Dinos Chapman *If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be* 2008 One of thirteen reclaimed Adolf Hitler watercolours on paper. Dimensions variable © Jake and Dinos Chapman Courtesy White Cube

177 Jake and Dinos Chapman *The End of Fun* 2010 Fibreglass, plastic and mixed media in nine vitrines 215x128.7x249.8cm Central vitrine 215.4x128x128cm © Jake and Dinos Chapman. Photo: Hugo Glendinning. Courtesy White Cube

if Hitler had gained his school certificate, subsequently not been rejected by the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and been more fulfilled as a painter.¹³⁴

Nine vitrines filled with endless variations of evil, little glass-fibre and plastic figures engaging in torture and slaughter on a monstrous scale, the killing seems to encompass the whole universe. Fascinating and appalling in equal measure this is the thousand-year Reich as Medieval *Götterdämmerung*, the scene we are confronted with owes a great deal to eschatological apocalyptic painters of the 14th and 15th centuries.¹³⁵ Everywhere there are hideous guignols, morphed monsters, skulls and skeletons, eviscerations and disembowelments, the killing fields surveyed by Hitler as he paints a blissful landscape on view in the next room. In Anne Frank's house someone sews clothes from body parts, Stephen Hawking is located sitting on a tank on a desert island as tourists with deformed limbs frolic on the beach, dinky Volkswagens ferrying to Hades in place of Charon's boat. There is a death camp. Swastikas are created from amputated legs. This artwork is harrowing and uncompromising, endless, repetitious, exhausting, boring; a great tableau of destruction, vultures everywhere. The orgy of despair and horror in all its fetishistic detail is amazing.¹³⁶ This is the art of darkness, all the Hells of theological imagination. Its precedents are many and Brian Sewell was not the only one to point in the direction of everything from Greek antiquity, to Altdorfer, to Bosch and Bruegel. He went a great deal further: "For me the how and why of it were vitally important, for my view of Hell was that when all the sharks have rotted, all the butterflies turned to dust and the Great Bed of Tracey been consumed by moth, the Chapman Brothers will be the only artists of their generation to deserve more than a wry footnote in the history of art."¹³⁷ I wonder? Is this really the dark side of genius? I do not think so. There it is.

'Art criticism is not a democracy.'¹³⁸



181 Jake and Dinos Chapman *Oi Pieter, I k-k-kan see your house from here! (detail)* 1607-2010

Dimensions variable. Oil on canvas and clothed mannequin. Photo: Stephen White. Courtesy White Cube.

Another altered work by the Chapman Brothers after 'a follower of Brueghel' possibly Joos de Momper from a work originally catalogued as *Crucifixion* by Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Joos de Momper (see chapter 7).

A New Terror: *The Conversion of Saul*

"Doubt is part of all religion" Isaac Bashevis Singer

"The true function of art is to explain life" Nikolai Chernyshevsky¹³⁹

"Every work of art is the child of its time: often it is the mother of our emotions"

Wassily Kandinsky

JESUS is the only God with a date in History.¹⁴⁰ This is no fantasy, this is verifiable fact. Richard Dawkins may have compared belief in Christmas with belief in fairies, yet accounts of the birth of Jesus are as far from a fairy tale as could be. Fairy tales are make-believe, swirled in the mists of obscurity; once upon a time, long, long ago, in a far away land – whereas Christianity is rooted in history, in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of King Herod; we know the time to within a year or two, the place to within a mile or so. He was real; belief in what He was is another matter.¹⁴¹

Have nothing to do with myths and fairies, St Paul wrote. Fairy tales are escapism, rags to riches, a handsome prince, a gallant rescue, and happy ever after. Whereas this story is one of foreign occupation, illegitimacy and shame, the brutal murder of male babies; there is no feel-good factor, just a harsh political reality. Fairy tales make no demands of us, unlike those put upon the young girl given burial spice at the birth of her son and saw Him tortured and executed in the prime of life.

Sexuality, gay rights, civil partnerships – Christianity in all its denominations makes a poor fist of presenting itself these days. It has little skill in setting the agenda and is frequently disposed to argue publically in order to present the most divided face it can manage to the world. Headline-grabbing issues about sex fight for attention in the newsroom, and leaders of the Christian churches can usually be relied upon to supply some ill-considered, sensational, divisive copy.¹⁴² The carpenter who lived two thousand years ago, was fully man and fully God, gets lost in all this. It's old news.

If newspapers are a rough first draft of history then, judged by the standards of the day, Paul is writing, often in the heat of the moment, a mix of news stories with some travel journalism thrown in to lighten it up a bit.¹⁴³ There was certainly confrontation and division in the Church at the time.¹⁴⁴ Paul wrote about it. Today, he is frequently maligned for his views. It may be a selective reading of his letters but it is easy to see how a progressive in one age may be traduced in another. He is not someone you can be neutral about.

The Gospels focus on Jesus, the man, his teachings, miracles and the escalating conflict with the authorities in a country under occupation, a conflict that ended with death by crucifixion, a common enough punishment in the Roman Empire. They culminate in Jesus' resurrection and a new kind of life.

This is where the Acts of the Apostles takes up the story, after Jesus' ascension. They are history, reportage of eyewitness accounts. According to a throw away line in Luke, Saul is present at a turning point in the life of the Church, the stoning of Stephen.¹⁴⁵ Vigorously enforcing orthodoxy, Saul was a Christian persecutor on a personal vendetta, a vigilante for Judaism. He was a tough guy.¹⁴⁶ At times he has received a raw deal from the Catholic Church that has always promoted Peter as the foundation of the papacy, whereas Paul is associated so closely with the Reformation and Luther. Two approaches, two quite different temperaments, two personalities; it is easy to see why Paul would appeal to Pieter Bruegel the Elder. "In the midst of life we are in death" says St Paul. The sober truth of that remark is concealed from most of us for most of the time. Not Pieter Bruegel. As Alva approached the Netherlands there was no hiding place from it.

Faith cannot exist without doubt. Ambiguity about religion was inevitable, amidst the horrors of a fanatical age, prudence dictating at least reticence. "His Catholicism was only intended for the outer world. It was prompted by the desire to live quietly" was a comment about Ortelius that would serve for his friend Pieter Bruegel; "he was a religious individualist".¹⁴⁷ Graham Greene described himself as a Catholic agnostic.¹⁴⁸ The phrase also seems a good fit for Bruegel.

Of all the paradoxes and contradictions in Bruegel faith is the most complicated. He may have been an eccentric Catholic, but then he was probably an eccentric man. We imagine that at times in his life Bruegel was that anomaly, a Catholic without God; and at others, Bruegel may have lost his faith but never his belief in God. The difference between the two was described in a short story, *A Visit to Morin*, where 'belief' was arguments in favour of theological propositions, and that whilst one may not be convinced by the propositions one could still have faith, whereas one could still have faith even when one was not convinced by rational argument that amounted to a rational disbelief where faith survives.¹⁴⁹ "One is attracted to the faith, believing is the problem."¹⁵⁰ Faith demands unconditional acceptance, belief with one's eyes closed. Clinging to one's faith, doggedly and without joy, churchgoing a duty parade, is something most of us have done or felt pressured to do at some stage in our lives. Clinging on at the time of the Reformation must have been something else. For most of us, the journey of faith is up and down, back and forth, high road and low road throughout our whole lives, but amidst the desecration and destruction of 1566, ornaments ruined, statuary burned, a belief in Hell, even if it was a hell on earth, would not be difficult. It would be much harder if not impossible to believe in a heaven on earth. Facing execution for one's faith, Heaven remained rigidly on the other side of death.

"And as he went on his journey, it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus; and suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him. And falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"¹⁵¹ The Christian persecutor is transformed into the Christian evangelist, Saul becomes Paul, Christianity expanded beyond its Jewish origins, and through his writing (the earliest documents of the New Testament of undisputed authenticity), a door opened onto the early Church, the struggles with theology, the building blocks of the faith, and crucially, the evidence set out by those who witnessed the resurrection – before the gospels were written down. Thus Paul became pivotal to Christianity. Without him there would be no Catholic Church. Arrested in Jerusalem, Paul was executed in Rome in 64AD, after a trial lasting two years.

Committed to his faith Bruegel was nevertheless challenged and disillusioned by it. The debate as defined by Luther centred around Paul. Thus St Paul is our window into early Christianity, the door to the Reformation, and one of the keys to Bruegel.

More than anyone before him in 1500 years of Church history, Luther found in Paul direct access to God through faith. An Augustinian Nominalist, Luther adopted the ideal of a simpler theology, a return to the spring of Christian truth in scripture. And in Paul's Epistle to the Romans he found what he was looking for: "The just man liveth by faith".¹⁵² The 95 theses contained no mention of the doctrine of justification by faith but his attack on the Church sprang from his Pauline conviction of God's grace. He did not attack indulgences to reach a doctrine of justification by faith alone. He applied the doctrine of justification to judge a specific indulgence. He produced a new understanding of God, humanity, the Church, and the sacraments by rethinking theology. And by emphasising the freedoms of Christians he led what might today be called a paradigm shift in the overall constellation of theology, religion and society at the same time as Copernicus was redefining astronomy and kick-starting the scientific revolution away from the geocentric picture of the world to a heliocentric cosmology. By moving the emphasis from an all-powerful ecclesiastical machine to concentration on Christ and the gospels Luther split the Church and also caught the mood of the time.



182 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Conversion of Saul* Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

His criticisms of medieval Christianity were battles fought out for the rest of Bruegel's lifetime. Appreciating this helps the viewer to understand his paintings. The Roman system did not collapse in an apocalyptic end-time as the Reformers anticipated. Neither did everyone accept Luther's more radical criticisms of the Latin sacrifice of the Mass, the ministry of the Church, the concept of the priest and monasticism, the law of celibacy, the cult of relics, veneration of the saints, pilgrimages and so on. A battleground existed and in the fog of war common ground was ignored. Contemptuous of Aristotelian scholasticism, he was not a Humanist. Humanism was European, international, an intellectual aristocracy. Luther was German, national and a man of the people.

The acute political and religious strife of the Netherlands in 1567 is the other part of the background to this picture. Political and religious persecution led to revolution that in turn led to reprisals. For Bruegel's contemporaries there can be little doubting the direct political implications of his work. Biblical scenes painted with the characters in contemporary dress ram home the relevance of the subject matter. An illustration of Saul's conversion with all its implications for Church history leaves little room for doubt in its message.

Because commentators cannot reconcile the dates, the comment is often made that this picture cannot be showing Alva crossing the Alps. But Alva did arrive in the Netherlands in 1567. His army of 9,000 foot soldiers and 1200 cavalry (plus 'a force of two thousand prostitutes, as regularly enrolled, disciplined, and distributed as the cavalry or the artillery') left Carthagenia on 10 May and travelled over Mount Cenis in the first week of June, then through Savoy, Burgundy and Lorraine, reaching Brussels on 22 August 1567.

Despite the fact that Alva's first port of call was to claim *The Garden of Earthly Delights* for Philip II this was not simply a shopping trip for an artistic connoisseur. Alva arrived to suppress the revolt by force. He had unlimited powers to force 'this rebellious and heretical country' into submission, 'to punish the guilty with unbending severity'.¹⁵³ It is inconceivable that Bruegel was unmoved by Alva's reign of terror. His reputation went before him, he was a man "who had been devoted from his earliest childhood, and from his father's grave, to hostility against unbelievers, and who had prophesied that treasure would flow in a stream, a yard deep, from the Netherlands as soon as the heretics began to meet with their deserts". His exploits in Italy on behalf of the Emperor subduing Campagna would have been enough. The mere announcement of his impending arrival was enough to cause consternation according to Motley – 'the day of doom [had] dawned'.¹⁵⁴

Alva came as a conqueror, not as a mediator. As he is supposed to have told Philip's Regent, the Duchess of Parma, "I have tamed people of iron in my day, shall I not easily crush these men of butter?" It should also not be surprising that we know nothing of Bruegel's political and religious convictions. This was a dangerous time to express a view on anything. His associates and friends give us a clue, his allegiances shifting over time in the winds of change.¹⁵⁵

By overlaying the religious struggle with political circumstances Bruegel produced a complex piece of multiple imagery. As lives ran out of control this was a time of massive mental reorganisation. The religious struggle was one thing that Bruegel took from Paul's story. The other was his spectacular three-dimensional religious experience that reset the topography of his mind. To quote Paul "for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity; so that they are inexcusable".¹⁵⁶ In other words, if something is good, creation shouts and sometimes whispers a rumour of the divine. If ever there was a time when a nation looked for divine intervention it was as the blood began to flow in the Low Countries in 1567.

The subject of Bruegel's painting was not new, although it was not a frequent choice at the time. Contemporaries like Frans Floris and Lucas van Leyden had pictured the scene, yet Bruegel's approach was unusual. The landscape, the composition, the drama, the complexity,

they are all very different and unexpected. There is no city and no blinding light from Heaven. Instead we have a glimpse of the sea and mountains.

This is Bruegel's most dramatic, fictitious, Alpine scheme. Locating Saul's conversion in such a landscape is not wrong; there is no reference to the event's precise spot in the Bible, but then the Golan Heights on the road to Damascus do not constitute a mountain range. But such a fantastic landscape, painted in a totally convincing style, coupled with the lack of symbolism in the arrangement of main characters, and thus without any mystery surrounding the event as a whole, make the image totally plausible.¹⁵⁷ The main protagonist has fallen from his horse. Just off centre, he is not the immediate focus of the painting that is dominated by mounted figures that have stopped to see what has happened. The mountain path to the left, and these horsemen, form a triangle with the fallen rider at its apex. Within the triangle, an ominous figure in black has his back to us as he surveys the scene and the dark sky ahead.

It is a snapshot, a transitory moment, frozen like a frieze-frame; "a few moments earlier the train would not yet have been in view, a few moments later it would be out of sight".¹⁵⁸ We must deduce what it is all about. The question we are left with, is to ask if Bruegel is setting the example of Saul of Tarsus before Alva, the general famous for always wearing black? Like Saul, Alva had a reputation for vigorously enforcing orthodoxy, like Saul he was a persecutor seemingly hell-bent on a personal vendetta, a vigilante for his cause. No one could be as obstinate as Saul of Tarsus, perhaps one of the greatest enemies Jesus had. Nobody could have wanted to believe less. Saul stood by while Christians were martyred and was on a campaign to eradicate them when he was struck blind on the road to Damascus and heard the voice of Christ. If even someone as awful and committed as Saul could change, why not Alva?

Is Bruegel making a plea to someone on his way to persecute believers, to demonstrate that in fact there is another way? That it is never too late to reconsider, to turn back?¹⁵⁹ As Walter Gibson and others have pointed out attempts to find "overt anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic propaganda in Bruegel's later paintings generally fall short of convincing proof".¹⁶⁰ This is not quite the point. When the butcher is on the way to his charnel house and you are convinced that in his enthusiasm matters will soon spiral out of control until the Netherlands is drenched in blood, you comment and protest in the ways available to you.¹⁶¹

The relation between what is public and what is private in his paintings is very interesting, both fascinating and useful for us to think about. Everything that is best about his work has a sense of inwardness, a sense of isolation, an elegiac artist who seems with his various commissions to have had to shoulder all kinds of public burdens, whilst commenting on the frontline of a religious war. The journalistic element in the work parallels Paul's writing, it has a journalistic genesis. Why did Bruegel not locate Saul in his own era, in the familiar surroundings and costumes of his own age? The Talmudic scholar Emmanuel Levinas would argue that we all try to reduce uncomfortable difference back into things that we understand and feel comfortable with, forever translating difference into familiar sameness. This was Bruegel's way of making the story relevant.

Bruegel's *Conversion of Saul* should be interpreted as both a biblical motif and a topical commentary as surely as the *Massacre of the Innocents*. By presenting the biblical text as a contemporary scene he stressed the need for faith, and its relevance to his own time. By locating the scene in such a landscape he emphasised the vulnerability of man in the overall grandeur of God's creation. By making the story's main protagonist so small he demonstrates the ultimate insignificance of man, and in leaving him lying there alone, surrounded by witnesses, he indicates the personal struggle that everyone was compelled to face in a time of religious turmoil – their ultimate decision having a profound consequence for the rest of their lives.¹⁶² This is a profound work of art that rises above its temporal context to ask questions of us all, a didactic drama, and a great artistic narrative, one without a horizon, one where there is no end in sight.

Entr'acte **Gerhard Richter** The dogged despair of the secular artist

IF I COULD paint like anyone I wish it were Gerhard Richter. In 1964 at the age of 32 he wrote "I hate the dazzlement of skill". Well Gerhard, I do not. As much as he may deny it, he paints timelessly – like Vermeer. His technical mastery can be compared with the greatest. The sheer technical wizardry is amazing. If anyone should claim painting is dead, Richter is the answer.¹⁶³ That technical skill is a reminder of the relentless rigour of old-fashioned art school training, something that is still to be found in the five-year courses in Poland and much of central Europe.

Kirk Varnedoe, a former chief curator of painting at MoMA has called Richter "a part-time abstractionist" and went on to call him "a painter of doubt, one who constantly lives with 'yes, but'". Richter's stance on religion has mellowed over the years and is still inconclusive. Yet as much as he has refuted it, confounded it and skirted around it, it has been his focus and obsession. "Art is making sense and giving a shape to that sense. It is like the religious search for God." Robert Storr has described Richter's impulses in terms of religious doubt.¹⁶⁴ "I believe in nothing" is Richter's most famous statement.¹⁶⁵ Richter has refreshingly stated that "I am inconsistent, noncommittal, passive; I like the indefinite, the boundless; I like the continual uncertainty." That's life.¹⁶⁶

As a child of Germany's zero hour, Richter belongs literally and figuratively to that fatherless generation that was full of doubt; having faced the reality of loss and armed with the sense that reality was unknowable and therefore unrepresentable, reinforced the relationship his paintings have with death. Art, he once wrote, "has always been basically about agony, desperation and hopelessness". By contrast he saw the art world as "entirely superficial. Openings, dealership, social game-playing: these have become the form of art. They have long since wholly or at least largely taken its place".

After 13 years of National Socialism, and 16 years of Communism, he found it hard to come to terms with Capitalist Realism.¹⁶⁷ While many of his contemporaries abandoned painting for other forms of art, Richter turned to art history, "a memory of the past of painting",¹⁶⁸ and to paintings as a window and a mirror.¹⁶⁹

Elusive, mysterious, haunting, often blurred, detached and unemotional, unclassifiable, inconsistent, idealistic, funereal (the Baader-Meinhof pictures), the continuing virtuoso display of technique can be overwhelming. His smorgasbord approach with its varieties of style from photo-realism to total abstraction, the lack of consistency or any clear progression in subject matter, mean Richter has no signature style, and in that way he unnerved the art world.¹⁷⁰ "I painted through the whole history of art toward abstraction. I painted like crazy", he told Storr in the catalogue interview. He is so prolific working with the 'iconography of the every day' to painting like Titian. And why not? He can do it. Very few can. He described his abstract paintings as "an assault on the falsity and religiosity of the way people glorify abstraction with such phony reverence". I am sure his range is there to prove to himself that he can do it, fine draughtsmanship, painterly virtuosity, which is why he frequently produces work in a new direction, only to then move on immediately to something completely different.

He cannot be categorised. Like any market, the art world looks for 'security' and it finds that in repetition, something Richter has never served up. It finally accepted him as the awesome prices his canvases now fetch reveal. His ricochet oeuvre has become acceptable.

"Part chameleon, part provocateur"¹⁷¹... Richter's 'take' on life appears to be that of a man permanently focused on 'the dark side of the road'.¹⁷² Displacement, instability, despair, are words that come to mind when looking at many of his works.

A determined, perplexing and confusing heterogeneity is the general summing up of Richter's work. Someone who resists a unified appraisal with the "vast pictorial and conceptual territory"¹⁷³ he has mapped out for himself. He ranges from "serene or pyrotechnic beauty to brooding austerity"¹⁷⁴

with work that contains "pleasure and pain, sly wit and high seriousness".¹⁷⁵

With his unflinching, unswerving vision, Richter is a latter day Don Quixote forever attacking the windmills of society's social ambiguities, he "narrows the gap between personal experience and public reality, between an unpleasant and painful guilt-infected past and a present dependent on selective memory."¹⁷⁶

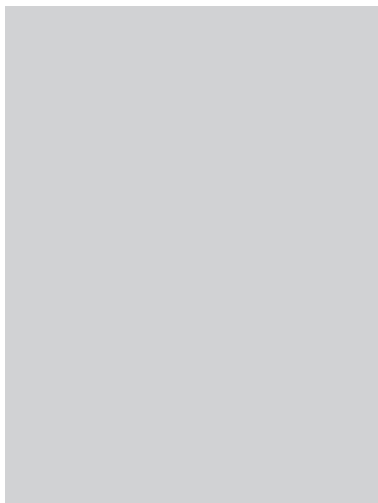
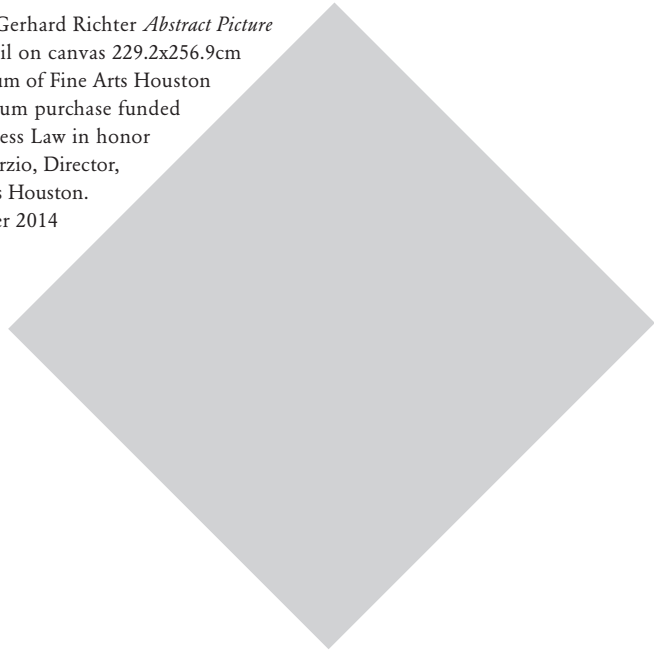
His art has that much power.

His preoccupation with Christian belief, he calls himself a 'sympathiser', who despite his reservations about belief and dogma has been commissioned by the Church.¹⁷⁷ Like Barnett Newman (a Jewish anarchist with Cabalistic leanings), whose *Stations of the Cross* Richter is said to admire, Richter accepted a commission on condition that the paintings could be abstract, and in 1998 completed six rhomboid canvases, *Abstraktes Bild (Rhombus)*, molten fields of orange-red for San Giovanni Rotondo, a church in Puglia, only to have them later rejected for being 'excessively abstract'. Evoking technology and science ahead of religion and the divine, and combining chance with calculation, his abstract¹⁷⁸ stained glass window for the south transept of Cologne cathedral, completed in 1997, was chosen when the Church rejected a traditional figurative design.¹⁷⁹ They went for pixels not parables.¹⁸⁰ Richter was quoted as saying it was a "window for eternity".¹⁸¹

Richter is now designing windows for the cathedral at Reims. It seems to have started a trend. Sigmar Polke designed windows for the Grossmünster Cathedral in Zurich (from 1518 the church of Huldrych Zwingli), Markus Lüpertz has worked on Sankt Andreas in Cologne, and Neo Rauch created a triptych for Naumburg Cathedral. Anselm Kiefer meanwhile, one major German artist without a religious commission, has purchased Cologne Cathedral's lead roof.

Now that is interesting.

183 Gerhard Richter *Abstract Picture*
(*Rhombus*) (851-1) 1998 oil on canvas 229.2x256.9cm
The Museum of Fine Arts Houston
Museum purchase funded
by Caroline Wiess Law in honor
of Peter C Marzio, Director,
The Museum of Fine Arts Houston.
© Gerhard Richter 2014



184 Gerhard Richter *Betty* 1988 oil on canvas 102.2x72.4cm
Saint Louis Art Museum, Funds given by Mr & Mrs R Crosby Kemper Jr through the Crosby Kemper Foundations, The Arthur & Helen Baer Charitable Foundation, Mr & Mrs Van-Lear Black III, Anabeth Calkins and John Weil, Mr & Mrs Gary Wolff, the Honorable & Mrs Thomas F Eagleton; Museum Purchase, Dr & Mrs Harold J Joseph, and Mrs Edward Mallinckrodt, by exchange 23:1992 © Gerhard Richter 2014.

Facts are subversive

“The meaning of a work depends on the co-operation of the viewer. Those people who live without inner images, lacking imagination and the necessary sensitivity to generate their own set of mental associations, will see nothing at all” Antoni Tàpies

ART THAT celebrates freedom of expression matters most of all to those who do not have it. *The Triumph of Death* is an anguished account of the impossibility of finding meaning or a pattern in the world to which we are chained, rendered by an unsparing eye.

We are confronted by things we would rather not see as Bruegel tells us things we would rather not know. He gives the hordes of nameless fears that took shape in his mind an inner legitimacy which their daemonic forms merely serve. These grotesques are the visual manifestations of a nightmare world. He transmuted its horrors into art. It is painfully, magnificently real, an uncanny pre-echo of the images that documented mass murder in the death camps and the malevolent minds that built them. Bruegel painted his nightmares to keep them at bay.¹⁸²

Bruegel educates us by sleight of hand. He draws us into his pictures. Their enduring popularity relies not on their differences but their similarities to our own age and every age. As Mrs Gaskell put it, ‘we have to look to the past, the present and the future’, and in that, Bruegel is a guide.¹⁸³ The leading artist of 16th century Spanish Netherlands, Bruegel did not have the 20th century’s luxury of abstraction with its ambiguity of allusion to horror in an aesthetically pleasing mix, for example à la Antoni Tàpies. Tàpies may attack the surface of a picture in a way reminiscent of flayed flesh, but the slashed and gashed paint is carefully controlled, the demands of elegance countering the aggression. As with Bruegel, the underground language of his images may appear impenetrable, perhaps only decodable by an initiate, but, within the context of Franco’s dictatorship, he was an equally politically subversive artist, whose methods were indirect, one who rendered his meanings opaque, and hence demanding of the spectator’s close attention. The language in the case of Tàpies is derived from his most persistent technique, the use of graffiti, an easily legible though clandestine language. With Bruegel we are there in Europe’s charnel house from the 16th century to the present day. Imprecise as to location, this is nevertheless a frighteningly realistic, believable, and understandable image, by way of the clandestine visual language of his day.

Kenneth Clark talked of Bruegel’s ‘all-embracing sympathy with humanity’, a vision all too often associated with the implacable forces of nature rather than the relentless forces of occupation and repression.¹⁸⁴ Bruegel’s vision of the horrors and tragedies of his age seen from a profoundly religious standpoint were beyond Clark. To understand genius is difficult. Hans Keller once said that great artists have always been less and done more than the public wishes to believe. As they are human, we identify with them because they have ‘been less’. But what they ‘did’ is completely beyond us. Their plane of creativity is not simply a question of degree in comparison to ourselves, but of a completely different kind. What counts are not their human frailties but their inhuman uncommon gifts. Keller also once said, “art arises where the arbitrary and the predictable are superseded by unpredictable inevitability”. The genius delivers that unpredictable inevitability. That was Bruegel.

The reception of Bruegel’s art by his circle of friends and associates, and in turn their contacts throughout the culturally active urban middle class, the nobility, merchants and intellectuals, is a clue to how his art functioned, and “the multilateral character of the interplay between the artist, his art and his audience”.¹⁸⁵ He was his own master of ceremonies, for all the majesty and grandeur of some of the work. Yet it is the absence of the nobility and the “far

from idealized representation of the common people and their activity or inactivity” that were surprising innovations that both impacted pictorial tradition and echoed society’s concerns with peasants and work.¹⁸⁶ ‘A man does not show his greatness by being at one extremity, but rather by touching both at once.’¹⁸⁷ That too was Bruegel. The completely unsentimental, unflattering, unvarnished, compassionate, honest images that he produced stand up for humanity in a magnificent and memorable way.

When we look at a painting on the wall, we only see what the artist has chosen to disclose – the finished work of art. The mystery surrounding what he thought, how it was made, is for us to discover. Bruegel whose work appears so simple and straightforward is in reality as mysterious as any artist could be. Like actors in a play, the minor characters of history have their moments when they advance from the rear of the stage to dominate briefly the whole scene in the full glare of the footlights, before once more receding into the background. This was his moment.

If the understanding of metaphorical language is essential to faith itself, if one cannot move from the visible to the symbolic, then one could never comprehend God. And if faith is doubt, not certainty, then it is appropriate for such a pioneer as Bruegel that “the only progressive art is the art of doubt”.¹⁸⁸ Yet in his pictures, even the doubting Bruegel does not offer theological simplicity, only complexity. His fictions were devised to teach his audience how to think about what it took to be true. And whereas the paintings of Bosch were like training manuals for the minds of his audience, that actively worked on the ‘reader’ to expand their mental capacity provided they could discover the set of implicit instructions on how it might be best to use them, Bruegel is far more arousing, freeing the emotions of his audience like Kafka’s wonderful observation ‘to be an axe for the frozen sea within us’. He is like a set of parables about parables, that only indirectly concern the kingdom of God, and focused rather on the ability of his audience to handle the visual language of his art, to see with their faith, and listen with their hearts.¹⁸⁹ “To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; that hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”¹⁹⁰ The larger message of the painting of the *Sower* is rather like a parable itself, with its cast of undistinguished, unsophisticated characters holding its universal meaning close to themselves. It is for the audience to discern the subject and its significance: if they wilfully shut their eyes God will withdraw from them.¹⁹¹



185 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Landscape with the Parable of the Sower
San Diego, Timken Art Gallery

- 1 Ángeles González-Sinde, the Spanish Minister of Culture, and a film director and screenwriter, speaking after a visit to the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona in 2009 to view an exhibition of the work of photographer Robert Capa. The quote in full "Art is always manipulation, from the moment you point a camera in one direction and not another". Doubts are regularly raised these days about the veracity of certain images, none more so than Capa's "falling soldier" from the Spanish Civil War, one of the most famous images of combat ever made. Long debated, there are a string of critics claiming it was faked, staged, in a place 50 kilometres from its supposed location, Cerro Muriano north of Córdoba. Born Endre Erno Friedmann, Capa's admission that he invented the persona of Robert Capa, and that rather than a reckless war photographer, he knew when to hide, only fuelled the suspicions that some of his images might not be exactly what he would have us believe.
- 2 Margaret Carroll *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe* six case studies covering portraiture, proverbial lore, urban and rural festivity, biblical topology, the city view, mythology, epideictic allegory, and animal behaviour, all of which, in the words of Walter Melion reviewing the book wrote: "she asserts, encode relations of power set forth as exemplary in contemporary political treatises deriving variously from the Aristotelian analogy between marriage and government." Walter Melion 'Allegory, Mode, and Authorship in the Study of Northern Art' *Art History* vol 33/3 June 2010 pp534-542
- 3 The first three examples are all Associated Press images of the United States involvement in Vietnam. It has frequently been argued that documentary photographs did more than anything else to turn the public against the war than AP. The three pictures were taken by Malcolm Browne in 1963, Eddie Adams in 1968, and Nick Ut in 1972. *Vietnam: The Real War* 2013
- 4 Michael Byers 'Atrocity exhibition' *Guardian* 24 May 2008
- 5 The full story is set out by Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris *Standard Operating Procedure: A War Story* 2008
- 6 Nobody above the rank of sergeant was sent to prison.
- 7 Had the American figurative artist Leon Golub (1922-2004) lived to see these images, so like his own work had long predicted, with its imagery of torture chambers, the brutality and dirty secrets of tormentors, the oppression, exclusion, sexual tension, a whole catalogue of immorality, the pathology of power, he would surely not have been at all surprised.
- 8 So ideologically and emotionally charged do these images become that people still tread carefully. Capa did not caption his pictures and when the films arrived at Magnum in Paris the studio attributed words and dates to them. The potential for mistakes to be made was easy. Philip Knightley in his book *The First Casualty* was the first to challenge the picture's authenticity. Identification of the falling soldier in 1966 as Federico Borrell led Magnum to claim was conclusive proof that it was a genuine photograph. The speculation and debate seemed set to continue as it had in 2009. Whether the picture could have been made where, when and how, Capa's admirers and heirs claim may always be in doubt. It was just another detective story, the crux and core of which we thought would never know. However, in 2013 the voice behind the image was heard for the first time. On 22 October the International Centre of Photography released a newly-discovered recording of a radio interview from 1947 during which Capa recounted the story of being in a trench in Andalusia in September 1936 with 20 Republican soldiers who repeatedly attempted to rush an enemy machine gun. It is the only known recording of his voice: "So the fourth time I just kind of put my camera above my head and even didn't look and clicked a picture when he moved over the trench and that was all... I stayed in Spain for three months, and when I came back I was a very famous photographer." He called it "the best picture he ever took" – the one he never even saw through the viewfinder. Capa died in 1954 covering the French war in Indochina. The rest is history, albeit of an extraordinarily tangled kind, as became clear when the so-called 'Mexican suitcase' turned up in 2007 containing 126 rolls of film taken by Capa, David Seymour ('Chim') and Gerda Taro, pioneer, leftwing heroine, legend, and sometime lover of Capa. Its discovery led to the reattribution of many of the images to Taro, who finally emerged from the shadow of Capa.
- 9 Gospel According to St John 1:5 "And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life. And this life is in his Son."
- 10 Or is it "art of an un-Italianate nature such as that by Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Bruegel the Elder" as observed by Margaret A Sullivan *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance* 1994 p1
- 11 *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* or *The Archangel Michael Slaying the Apocalyptic Dragon* oil on panel 117x162cm Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
- 12 See chapter 8 for a note on the Bruegel family names and signatures.
- 13 *The Conversion of Saul* oil on panel 108x156cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 14 *The Triumph of Death* oil on panel 117x162cm Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
- 15 *The Massacre of the Innocents* oil on panel 109.2x156.7cm The Royal Collection, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Hampton Court Palace, London / copy after Pieter Bruegel *The Massacre of the Innocents* oil on panel 116x160cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 16 J H Hessels *Epistulae Ortelianae* p53, quoted by René Boumans 'The Religious Views of Abraham Ortelius' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol 17 3/4 1954 p 376
- 17 *The Procession to Calvary* oil on panel 124x170cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 18 Exposing the moral murkiness of their secret lives and what happens when people playing a game can lose sight of their ultimate purpose, only to begin to play the game for its own sake, Roy Bland asks the question in John le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and George Smiley suggests 'Scott Fitzgerald' p150
- 19 René Sneyers 1969 'Les Restauration des Bruegel des Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique' *Brabant* 4, p18
- 20 The Apocalypse of St John 12:7-10
- 21 *Netherlandish Proverbs* oil on panel 117.5x163.5cm Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie / *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* oil on panel 118x164.5cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna / *Children's Games* oil on panel 118x161cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 22 Max Friedländer calls *Children's Games* "an apotheosis of childhood" and *Netherlandish Proverbs* "an apotheosis of folly" *Die altniederländische Malerei*, vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p22
- 23 Hans Sedlmayr pointed out in 1934 how the figures appear as abstract shapes and colours, not integrated into a spatial setting but dispersed in a seemingly random configuration. See *Bruegel's Macchia* – also for Sedlmayr's linking Bruegel to Giorgio de Chirico through both artists 'sense of estrangement'.
- 24 Walter Gibson commented "Renaissance man liked to contemplate not only nature but also his fellow creatures from a lofty position" *Bruegel* 1977 p77, and that Bruegel's perspective creates a stage set: "the upward-tilted ground plane and high horizon... create a broad stage" p79
- 25 William Shakespeare *As You Like It* Act 2:7 lines 140-141, and 142-144
- 26 Johna Huizinga *Homo Ludens (the play element of culture)* and the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:11
- 27 According to the World Health Organisation, depression is number five as a cause of death and disability in the world, whereas heart disease trails in sixth place. Even mild forms of depression, called dysthymia, can become serious as it is characterised by an inability to experience pleasure. Melancholy was recognised by Hippocrates in 5bc, Chaucer's characters were aware of it in the 14th century, late-medieval churchman called it acedia, and once Robert Burton wrote *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621 it became known as 'the English malady'. The historian Roy Porter has suggested that the disease simply became more stylish.

- 28 The 16th century saw a significant change in approaches to acedia. Before the Reformation feelings of isolation and anxiety were interpreted through religion; feelings about oneself would have been translated as 'soul', the judgemental gaze of others as 'God', and melancholy as 'the gnawing fear of eternal damnation'. The traditional Church had offered palliatives to the disturbed and afflicted via rituals designed to win divine forgiveness. Lutheranism rejected the rituals but still accepted that God was approachable and ultimately loving. Calvinism on the other hand provided a metaphysical framework for depression; if you felt isolated, persecuted, or even damned, it was because you actually were. In the late 16th century as the canton of Zurich became a Calvinist stronghold there was a surge in the suicide rate, while homicides fell. The newly self-centred individual appears to have become more isolated, distrustful of communal pleasures as Calvinism provided a transcendent rationale for this shift, intensifying the isolation and practically institutionalising depression as a stage in the quest for salvation.
- 29 See Barbara Ehrenreich *Dancing in the Streets: a History of Collective Joy* 2007
- 30 *ibid* p10
- 31 In the bombed-out ruins of the Belgian town of Ypres in 1916, Captain Fred Roberts and Lieutenant Jack Pearson discovered a printing press and decided to start a satirical journal. *The Wipers Times* was a spoof newspaper created by the two British Army officers for whom gallows humour was the only sane response to the trenches. It included jokes at the expense of senior officers, fake advertisements, advice on how to cure optimism, poetry, puns, and a general silliness that was Pythonesque long before its time. Their superiors saw it as an act of insubordination and subversion.
- 32 Erasmus *In Praise of Folly* "more than one Democritus is need for these absurdities, everyone agrees" p42, and "a thousand Democrituses wouldn't be enough to laugh at them" p75. Democritus is considered by some the father of modern science, but he was also known as the 'laughing philosopher' because of "his emphasis on the value of cheerfulness" (plato.stanford.edu/entries/Democritus – the Stanford online Encyclopedia of Philosophy) on account of his attitude to the folly of the world.
- 33 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 1:17-18
- 34 Irving Zupnick 'Bruegel and the Revolt of the Netherlands' *The Art Bulletin* 1964 XXIII-4 p288
- 35 Margaret Carroll reviewing 'Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in Children's Games & Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise' *The Art Bulletin* March 2002 (Edward Snow – Inside Bruegel 1997)
- 36 *Two Monkeys* oil on panel 20x23cm Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
- 37 Margaret Carroll 'Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation' *The Art Bulletin* 1981 63-1, p115
- 38 *The Adoration of the Magi* distemper on linen 124x169cm Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
- 39 Up to a point. The observation comes from Carroll, but we can find plenty of examples that counter the argument. Blind men in *Netherlandish Proverbs* reappear in the *Parable of the Blind* (tempera on canvas 86x156cm Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples); *Carnival and Lent* is a source for *The Cripples* and the engraving *The Dirty Bride; Ira* is a source for *Dulle Griet*; the *Misanthrope* takes from *Proverbs*, the horseman from *The Conversion of Saul* rides into *The Wine of St Martin's Day*, etc.
- 40 Wolfgang Stechow 1970 p80 *Madonna with a monkey* by Dürer c1496-9
- 41 Monkeys may have been on Bruegel's mind. *The Merchant Robbed by Monkeys* an engraving by Pieter van der Heyden after Bruegel from 1562 shows apes behaving as human beings. It has been suggested that the print may have been based on a German woodcut, c1480-90, and was later copied in an etching by Pieter van der Borcht, c1575.
- 42 Notwithstanding the identification as Antwerp when compared to an etching of the city published in the same year, see J Müller *Das Paradox als Bildform: Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegel d.A* 1999 figure 40
- 43 Irving Zupnick Bruegel and the Revolt of the Netherlands *The Art Bulletin* 1964 XXIII-4, p283
- 44 Most forcibly by Margaret Carroll who argues that this small painting symbolises prodigality and avarice, major concerns in the artist's lifetime as humanists attempted to find an answer to the question "What is the proper attitude of a Christian toward material wealth?" particularly in light of the Dutch publication of Brant's *Ship of Fools* in 1504 and 1548. See 'Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation' *The Art Bulletin* 1981; 63-1, p122
- 45 Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007, p181
- 46 Adolf Monballieu 'De "Twee aapjes" van P Bruegel of de Singerie (seigneurie) over de Schelde te Antwerpen in 1562' *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* 1983 p237-8
- 47 Margaret Carroll 'Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation' *The Art Bulletin* 1981, 63-1 p123
- 48 *The Two Monkeys* could also be set against Bruegel's *The Cripples* of 1568, another political and religious allegory. It is necessary to be careful here. One theory cannot answer everything. The cripples or beggars in the 1568 painting have foxtails attached to their clothes. This could be explained by the fact that in 1567, foxtails were worn by the Gueux during their uprising in Brussels. But they are also to be seen in *The Battle of Carnival and Lent* of 1559 long before that revolt. So the foxtail symbol must have another significance, perhaps a popular tradition associated with Shrovetide in Flanders? Robert Delevoy sees the work as the act of a partisan, *Bruegel* 1959 p76, and Gustav Glück *Peter Brueghel the Elder* 1958/1963 *Das grosse Bruegel-Werk*, p88, points out that the nobles opposing Margaret of Parma, the Regent in 1566, were proud to be called 'beggars'. An inscription on the back of the panel wishing "the cripples' circumstances may improve", noted by Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones *Pieter Bruegel* 2002 p230 is interesting – but proves nothing. We do not know when it was written or by whom. *The Cripples (The Beggars)* 18.5x21.5cm oil on panel Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 49 Wolfgang Stechow p80
- 50 Jean-Jacques Rousseau *Contrat Social* 1762 the opening line: "L'homme est né libre et partout il est dans les fers"
- 51 William Blake *Songs of Experience* 1794 "In every voice: in every ban, / The mind-forg'd manacles I hear"
- 52 Larry Silver *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* 2006 p23
- 53 *Dulle Griet* was always considered a work of 1562. The painting is dated, however, the lack of clarity in the inscription led to dates of 1562 and 1564 being attributed to it, until 1995 when Van Schoute and colleagues using infrared reflectography put forward the date as 1561. At the Antwerp *Landjuweel* of 1561 a play was performed in which a group of women included 'Griet who plunders in front of Hell', see Gibson p102. *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* is dated 1562. Unsigned and undated *The Triumph of Death* is generally dated c1562 due to its similarities with the other two paintings. See also n95.
- 54 RH Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p24
- 55 Walter Gibson *Bruegel* 1977 p11
- 56 Erasmus *Adages* "For in the proverbs of the ancient world is all its wisdom enshrined"
- 57 For audiences in the Low Countries in the 1550s and 1560s, proverbs were "precepts in wisdom... collected from the observations of the wise," which had "remained among the people as if they were public wealth in a common storehouse" Margaret Sullivan 'Bruegel's Proverbs: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance' *The Art Bulletin* 1991 vol73/3 p464 quoting JL Vives *Vives: On Education*

F Watson (ed) 1913 pp38-39

- 58 *Dulle Griet* oil on panel 117x162cm Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp
- 59 "Any actress who plays Grusha needs to study the beauty of Brueghel's "Dulle Griet" *Brecht* 1970-2003 vol7 p299 and goes on to say that the inspiration behind the painting "isn't war's atmosphere of terror' but rather 'something deeper' *Brecht on Theatre: Alienation Effects in the Narrative Pictures of the Elder Brueghel* edited and translated by John Willett 1964 p157. The unresolved contradictions in the image were what attracted him. "He manages to balance his contrasts, he never merges them one into another, nor does he practice the separation of comic and tragic; his tragedy contains a comic element and his comedy a tragic one." Quoted by Margaret Eddershaw *Actors on Brecht* from the Cambridge Companion to Brecht 1994, p256. Brecht met Gustav Glück after Helene Weigel gave him *Das grosse Brueghel-Buch* in 1934. Brecht met the Glücks "quite often" in the 1940s when they were all living in Santa Monica. It was there that Glück showed Brecht clearer photographs than the reproductions that appeared in his book. There is a detailed critique of Brecht's notes with regards Bruegel in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* by Wolfgang Hütt 1957-8 p281.
- 60 In fact three variants of the proverb were found by Grauls, dated 1549-68, a fact acknowledged by Gibson, the Kampen proverb collection of 1550 spelling it out as "She could plunder in front of Hell and return unscathed". Ever wayward, Karel van Mander had "He could plunder..."
- 61 Goedthals's proverb collection was published in Antwerp 1568. Margaret Sullivan draws attention to the increasingly important role of proverbs in the "dissemination of humanistic learning" see 'Bruegel's Proverbs: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance' *The Art Bulletin* 1991, 73-3 p435
- 62 Walter S Gibson *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* 2006 p125
- 63 Whereas *Galileo* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* are the plays by Brecht commonly cited with reference to Bruegel.
- 64 Walter S Gibson *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* 2006 p144
- 65 René Graziani 'Pieter Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet' and Dante' *Burlington Magazine* CXV 841, 1973 p215
- 66 The young maid wore red sleeves and the giant (created for the city by Bruegel's master Pieter Coecke) was so large that it would not fit through the city gates. See Margaret Sullivan 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet' *The Art Bulletin* 1977, 59-1, p64 notes 65 and 66.
- 67 The canon at Edinburgh Castle was called Mons Meg as it had been cast in Flanders. Gibson notes the canon known as Dulle Griet as being placed in the market in Ghent in 1578, implying that was its date of manufacture, whereas it had in fact been cast a century earlier.
- 68 Lodovico Guicciardini in 1567 was impressed with the degree to which women conducted their own business affairs.
- 69 Unusually, the Netherlands, France, England and Scotland were all governed by women: Margaret of Parma (1559-67), Catherine de' Medici (from 1559 effectively until 1575), Mary Tudor (1553-8), Elizabeth I (1558-1603), and Mary Stuart (1542- 67). In *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* John Knox wrote in 1558 that "he who judgeth it a monster in nature, that a woman shall exercise weapons, must judge it a monster of monsters that a woman shall be exalted above a whole realm and nation". See Gibson p108 who comments "it would have been natural for Bruegel and his contemporaries to ascribe the ills of their time to the malice and ineptitude of female rule, and it is not impossible that their fears were given concrete expression in the figures of Dulle Griet and her horde pursuing their reckless way past the portals of Hell".
- 70 *Ira (Wrath or Anger)* 1557 pen and brown ink 23x30cm Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe: one of a set of preparatory drawings for engraving by Pieter van der Heyden as *The Seven Deadly Sins (The Vices)*, and published by Hieronymus Cock 1557-60 22.5x29.4cm.
- 71 Margaret A Sullivan notes the popularity of Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* with reference to Zeydel's work on the poet 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet' *The Art Bulletin* 1977, 59/1 p61
- 72 There is also a reference to Bruegel's compendium of human folly *Netherlandish Proverbs*; male devils emerge to be tied down to cushions: "to tie a devil to a pillow" means to deal with the devil in question, in this case a man. Heretics were characterised as Devils, here we have a devil tied to a cushion and a ladder. The treasurer of Antwerp who would have been responsible for paying those identifying heretics lived in what was popularly called the 'House of the Big Fool'. In *Dulle Griet* the giant gives money to women from a sedentary position on top of a house. Pieter Coecke had painted murals in the Treasurer's 'House' in 1544.
- 73 René Graziani 'Pieter Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet' and Dante' *Burlington Magazine* CXV 841, 1973 pp209-218. Graziani points out that no Flemish or Dutch translations of Dante existed at this time, and French versions only existed in manuscript, whereas in fact, an inaccurate French version was certainly available in print. However, he puts forward the view that Bruegel may have been able to access a Latin version or that a friend or patron, such as Granvelle "went over it with him". Whilst this may or may not seem feasible, we should not see access as any impediment to Bruegel being able to use Dante as a point of reference, especially considering the use that Bosch may have made of it.
- 74 Margaret A Sullivan 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet' *The Art Bulletin* 1977, 59/1 p64
- 75 As early as 1559 in Antwerp, a centre of heresy and rebellion, "tumults were breaking out at executions" as crowds got out of hand, and shops were closed from fear of plundering, according to Brandt *The History of the Reformation* 1720
- 76 See Sullivan p56 re Mourin *Six sermons français inédits de Jean Gerson* 1946, Philips *Erasmus on His Times* 1967
- 77 Margaret A Sullivan 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet' *The Art Bulletin* 1977, 59/1 p63
- 78 Dominicus Lampsonius *Pictorum aliquot celeberrima Germaniae inferioris effigies* Antwerp 1572 - "Who is this new Bosch; Hieronymus again come to the world, who imitates his Master's clever dreams so skilfully with brush and style that he even surpasses him?"
- 79 *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* 1556 pen and brush, brown and grey-brown ink 21.6x30.7cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, published by Hieronymus Cock 1557 22.9x29.8cm. *The Temptation of St Anthony* c1556 pen and brush, brown and grey-brown ink 21.6x32.6cm Ashmolean, Oxford, the earliest known preparatory drawing by Bruegel specifically as a design for a print, later engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, published by Hieronymus Cock 1556 24.7x32.8cm
- 80 Nina Eugenia Serebrennikov 'The Draftsman Revealed, a review of Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints' *The Art Bulletin* 2002, 84-3 p506: "As both Walter Gibson and Larry Silver pointed out in their contributions to the one-day symposium in Rotterdam, Bosch's eschatological vocabulary had long since lost its fearful bite".
- 81 Guicciardini *Descrittione di... tutti i Paesi Bassi* 1567 "Pietro Brueghel di Breda grande imitatore della scienza, & fantasie di Girolamo Bosco, onde n'ha anche acquistato il soprannome di secondo Girolamo Bosco" p99d. Five years later, the Liège humanist Dominicus Lampsonius penned his famous verse that began 'Who is this new Bosch...' - a view endorsed by Karel van Mander in 1604 "he had practised a lot after the works of Jeroon van den Bosch".
- 82 Alaert Duhaemeel *Elephant at War* 1478-94 20.4x33.5cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. A mid-16th century engraving and etching by the unidentified Master of St George's Kermis *The Besieging of an Elephant* 40.2x54cm includes the name HIERONIMUS BOS INV presumably to increase sales. The image is a copy of the Duhaemeel engraving in the style of Bosch. Koldewey notes that Philip II owned a

painting by or after Bosch of the same title, replicas of which exist. See Koldewij, Vermet and Vandenbroek *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* 2001 p15 and pp116-7 for Vandenbroek and a watercolour derivative c1558.

- 83 Serebrennikov 'The Draughtsman Revealed – Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints' *The Art Bulletin* 2002, 84-3 p506
- 84 Manfred Sellink "The very lively and whimsical Pieter Bruegel": Thoughts on His Iconography and Context from the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* 2001 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York p60
- 85 The Apocalypse of St John 20:12-14 "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works. And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death". *The Last Judgement* 1558 pen and blackish brown ink 23x30cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, and engraved by Pieter van der Heyden and published by Hieronymus Cock 1558 22.5x29.4cm. It has been suggested the image has been developed from Alaert Duhaemel's engraving after a lost *Last Judgement* by Jheronimus Bosch (see Orenstein pp27-8). If true, it would be his only 'conventional' *Last Judgement*.
- 86 *The Descent of Christ into Limbo* pen and brown ink 22.3x29.4cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, and engraved by Pieter van der Heyden and published by Hieronymus Cock c1561 23.5x29.5cm
- 87 Luther had no scruples about which parts of the Bible he found valuable, it was dependent on whether they proclaimed the message he had discovered. St John's Gospel, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and 1 Peter were central to his core belief, together with the Psalms as they were prophecies of Christ. Many of the books he did not like were simply separated out. He gave them a collective title that has stuck, the Apocrypha (see *The Cambridge History of the Bible* 1963, pp7, 20-21). As Zbigniew Izydorczyk has pointed out in the preface to *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, 1997, the Gospel of Nicodemus has "been a victim of its own success... at the close of the Middle Ages, its popularity and prestige attracted the censure of church reformers striving to rid Christian religion of fancy and superstition". The book had three parts: an account of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension; the story of Joseph of Arimathea; and a report of Christ's Descent into Hell. (Izydorczyk notes in his introduction that its content was always changing.) Chapters 17-27, *Descensus Christi ad infernos* existed in Greek and Latin versions (but not the oriental versions). It was printed several times in the 15th and 16th centuries. One version of it contains the oldest known reference to the legend of Veronica. "Before its credibility was seriously challenged and eventually destroyed by the Reformation, the Latin apocryphon managed to penetrate into a variety of literary, theological, devotional and liturgical discourses" p3. European vernacular translations covered the whole of the composite original. Amid the Europe-wide expansion of the Reformed church during the 1540s and 50s Calvin's diatribes against hiding one's faith grew more bitter. In 1544 he sarcastically compared secret Protestants to Nicodemus who would only come to Christ out of cowardice, at night (John 3:1-21; 7:50; 19:39) – they were cowardly traitors to God. See *Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodémistes*. It was of course much easier to take a purist line on this if one was safely tucked up in Geneva. (Apokryphos is Greek for hidden.) Many Nicodemite crypto-Protestants simply waited for better times to come. Calvin went further in his condemnation, recognising in their character closet homosexuals. See Bernard Cottret *Calvin* 2000, p103.
- 88 Another artist who sailed close to the wind, blending the sacred with the secular sufficiently to draw the fire of Counter-Reformation critics, was Agnolo Bronzino, a mediocre Tuscan draughtsman who also used Dante as the source for an image of the same name. (One of his first commissions was to paint a portrait of Dante.) But in his case, the *Descent of Christ into Limbo* of 1552 displays a Renaissance nudist camp with three sultry sirens in a spellbindingly risqué altarpiece. "Whoever stops to gaze at this painting" complained one critic, "cannot but feel some stirring of the flesh." Renaissance art was certainly not tame.
- 89 The quotation "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be lifted up: and the King of Glory shall enter in" is 23:7 and 23:9 in Douay-Rheims, and 24:9 in most other bibles. The quote is from John Wesley's explanation of the verse.
- 90 *The Damned* pen and brown ink 26x16.9cm Musée du Louvre, Paris; *Christ Carrying the Cross* pen and brown ink over traces of silver-grey metalpoint 20.5x27.9cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.
- 91 Fritz Koreny et al *Early Netherlandish Drawings from Van Eyck to Hieronymus Bosch* 2002
- 92 Otto Benesch was the first to relate the two drawings to one another 1925, commenting on details of *The Damned* that reflected elements of *The Fall of the Damned* whilst claiming that was not the source; 'Über einige Handzeichnungen des XV. Jahrhunderts' 1925 pp181-2 (Netherlandish mid-15th century). Friedrich Winkler 'Die Wiener Kreuztragung' *NKJ* 9, 1958 pp83-108 (105-6). Fritz Grossmann 'New Light on Bruegel I: Documents and Additions to the Oeuvre; Problems of Form' *The Burlington Magazine* 101 10/1959 p345; Frits Lugt *Inventaire général des dessins des écoles du nord publié sous les auspices du Cabinet des Dessins: Maîtres des anciens Pays-Bas nés avant 1550* 1968 no66 (Netherlandish, probably Bruegel); Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p278. Fedja Anzelewsky *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. Als Zeichner: Herkunft und Nachfolge* 1975 no 179 (exhibition catalogue 19/9-16/11) ascribed the drawing to a Netherlandish master, second half 15th century. Hans Mielke called it problematic *Pieter Bruegel: Die Zeichnungen* 1996; Nadine Orenstein 2001 *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* 2001 p262 "lines and details are reinforced here and there with a darker ink than that of the original drawing, following a practice Bruegel frequently indulged, particularly in his figural compositions" noting also that Jan Bruegel may have used the image as a source for his own painting, *Aeneas in the Underworld* (Klaus Ertz *Jan Bruegel der Ältere (1568-1625): Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog* 1979 no67); Matthijs IJssink *From Bosch to Bruegel: the disenchantment of the world* Lille talk 2013
- 93 *The Fall of the Magician Homogenes* pen and brown ink 1564 23.3x29.6cm Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, later engraved by Pieter van der Heyden and published by Hieronymus Cock 1565 22.4x29.2cm; *Luxuria* or *Lust* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 22.8x29.5cm Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België/Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, one of a set of preparatory drawings for engraving as one of *The Vices* published by Hieronymus Cock c1558 22.6x29.6cm.
- 94 Book of Job 30:23. Possibly the oldest book in the Bible, Victor Hugo loved it: "Tomorrow, if all literature was to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work, I should save Job." Oswald Chambers thought Job taught us about suffering: why does God allow the righteous to suffer? How should the righteous suffer?
- 95 The date attributed to *The Triumph of Death* has varied considerably: Hulin de Loo (1907) 1565-6, Michel (1931) 1566-9, De Tolnay (1935) 1561-2, Friedländer (1937) 1562, Jedlicka (1938) 1562, Glück (1951) 1561-2, Genaille (1953) 1562-3, Delevoy (1959) 1568, Van Puyvelde (1962) Gibson (1977) and Marijnissen (1988) no date, Silver (2011) 1566-7. It has also been linked with the end of the artist's life and the suppression of the *rederijkerskamers* by the Duke of Alva in 1568.
- 96 Robert Delevoy *Bruegel* 1953 p102 sees *The Triumph* as representing a systemised version of earlier encyclopaedic layouts.
- 97 Like most of the facts about him, Pieter Bruegel's birthday is unknown. The year 1526 appears on a banner in a copy of *The Triumph of Death* made by Pieter Brueghel the Younger in 1606, and some people have interpreted this as a reference to his father's date of birth.
- 98 Bruegel's problem is Job's; "the God whom Job hopes to encounter for his innocence to be proved is the very one who, if Job is pure and righteous, must in Job's perception be unjust. Thus the God he looks to ultimately as the source of his hope for vindication is in his justice terms the source of no hope." Suzanne Boorer 'Job's Hope: a reading of the Book of Job from the perspective of hope' 1998 p117 *Colloquium Adelaide* then Belair vol30 pp101-122 Australia and New Zealand Theological Library Association

- 99 *The Execution of Maximilian* c1867-8 oil on canvas 193x284cm National Gallery, London. Following the death of Manet in 1883 members of his family cut the picture up. Degas bought the surviving pieces and reassembled them. His own collection was sold in 1918, the pieces were again separated, and only finally mounted on a single support in 1992.
- 100 John Berger *The Shape of a Pocket* 2001 p209. He was thinking of the callous indifference to human suffering, the murder squads, the death factories, demented killers, the special task forces or SS Action Squads, with their mobile gas vans, the large one, the Saurer that looked like a furniture or removal lorry and killed between 70 and 150 at a time, slowly. Developed after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, mobile killing units experimented with sealed 'gas vans' after complaints from members of the *Einsatzgruppen* of 'battle fatigue and mental anguish' brought on by shooting large numbers of innocent civilians. As extermination camps became established and whilst purpose built gas chambers were being constructed, the use of mobile facilities was significantly extended. At Chelmno (Kulmhof), near Lodz, the first camp to become operational, and where gas chambers were never built, on average 1000 people a day were killed between 8 December 1941 and 7 April 1943 in these vans, known officially as *Sonderwagen*, ie it was working six weeks before the Wannsee Conference at which approval of systematic genocide as *die Endlösung der Judenfrage* was agreed.
- 101 *Paradise Lost* Book 1, lines 62-6
- 102 See Hans J Nieuwendorp *Over de interpretatie van Pieter Bruegel's Dulle Griet* 1985, and Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones *Pieter Bruegel* 2002 p97
- 103 It has been suggested that the death of three kings, four queens, a Pope, and assorted princes and dukes are a relevant part of the background. "In the period of 1559-60 death had taken an unprecedented number of victims of high rank. The death of Charles V was seen in conjunction with those of "Henric II", Christian III of Denmark, Christian II (ex-king) of Denmark, and four queens, "Heleonara" (wife first of Emmanuel of Portugal, then of Francis I of France) and Maria (described as mother of King Sigismund of Poland), the sisters of Charles V, Mary of England (wife of Philip II of Spain), "bona Sfortia" (wife of "Lodowigh" of Hungary); as well as those of Pope Paul IV, two "Keurvorsten" (Cologne and Palestine), the Duke of Venice Paulus Priulus, and Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, "together with many of lesser family". These deaths were experienced as a universal calamity whose outcome was open to great speculation. Perhaps in the general reaction to the reports of these deaths we can find a specific atmosphere for the understanding of Bruegel's *Triumph of Death*." Jeremy Bangs 'Pieter Bruegel and History' *The Art Bulletin* 1978 vol60-4 pp704-5 after D P Pers *D'Onstede Leeuw: of Spring-ader der Nederlandscher Beroerten* 1641, 11
- 104 Five 'whys' – Book of Job 3:11-20
- 105 *ibid* 10:13
- 106 Antonio Gramsci, letter from prison 19 December 1929. (The phrase 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' is also sometimes attributed to his contemporary, Romain Rolland, the French Nobel laureate.)
- 107 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15:54
- 108 Book of Job 2:3
- 109 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 6:23
- 110 Just as it did for "the truly good man" Prince Myshkin, looking at a reproduction of the *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* by Hans Holbein the Younger c1522 hanging in Rogozhin's house. Fyodor Dostoevsky *The Idiot* part 2 chapter 4, which is said to be Dostoevsky's own reaction when he first saw the picture in Bern.
- 111 see Moxey for allusions to Petrarch and the mythological allegory of the Fates *Oud Holland* 1973 vol87 pp49-50
- 112 *The Suicide of Saul* oil on panel 33.5x55cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna based on First Book of Kings 31:1-5 Van Mander mentions a lost battle scene by Patinir on which it may have been based. Bruegel's future mother-in-law, Mayken Verhulst, was a miniaturist, and some think may have been an influence. For an alternative viewpoint on the absurdity of the military in *Netherlandish Proverbs*, see Carroll *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe* 2008 pp40-42
- 113 Fritz Grossmann *Pieter Bruegel: Complete Edition of the Paintings* 1966 pp193-4 re Dante
- 114 Silver Pieter *Bruegel* 2011 p280, and p253 tensions and conflict with the monarchy were something that Bruegel continued to feature the next year, 1563, in *The Tower of Babel* oil on panel 114x155cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 115 Margaret Carroll *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe* 2008 pp31-2, 84-5 Discontent at high taxes to pay for foreign wars, manipulation of bishoprics, general indignation at the behavior of Margaret of Parma, the regent, etc., all contributed to resentment towards the monarchy
- 116 *The Resurrection of Christ* c1562 pen and brown ink, brush and grey-blue and dark blue ink (Sellink p182 suggests this may "have been applied by a different hand") 43.1x30.7cm Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. The signature has been reapplied by a second hand, and the drawing has suffered from being stuck to an oak panel. The question of attribution is generally considered to have been resolved by Grossman 1954 pp54-63. (The quality of the light has given rise to speculation of alchemical symbolism, see Van Lennep 1965 and 1989.) Taken from the Gospel According to St Matthew 28:1-7 "... there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone..." Unusually it unites two themes: the news that Christ has risen with His later appearance. This drawing was later used for the design of an engraving by Philips Galle and published by Hieronymus Cock *The Resurrection of Christ* 45.1x33cm. The drawing was not produced for a print, Galle simply reversed the image, hence Christ raises his left hand in benediction. However, together with the print of *Death of a Virgin* also not made as a print design "led Galle to carry out his interpretations of the original compositions in an unusually free manner" Manfred Sellink *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* Nadine Orenstein (ed) 2001 p224
- 117 Rainer Maria Rilke, from the ninth of *The Duino Elegies* "But because truly being here is so much; because everything here apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way keeps calling to us."
- 118 Friedländer 1921 p102 'immensity of the battlefield'
- 119 Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 5:20 "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors"
- 120 Epistle of St Paul to the Colossians 1:27
- 121 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15:28
- 122 As JD Salinger reputedly told his daughter Margaret, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live." Salinger saw heavy fighting when serving with a unit that fought its way from Normandy to Berlin.
- 123 General Alan Brooke confiding to his diary, quoted by Alistair Horne *To Lose a Battle – France 1940* 1969 p511
- 124 Lyn Macdonald 1914 *The Days of Hope* 1987 pp421-422
- 125 First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15:55
- 126 In 2009 Auschwitz launched a YouTube channel and a Facebook site. "If our mission is to educate the younger generation to be responsible in the contemporary world, what better tool can we use to reach them than the tools they use themselves", said Pawel Sawicki, a museum official. On my visit there were just a few dozen other people. Since the initial wave of interest in its first ten years, 1947-57, when a total of 2 million visited, by 1972 fewer than 40,000 people went to Auschwitz each year. Now, mass 'dark tourism' as it is known has taken hold: in 2000 there were 450,000 visitors; by 2010 there were 1.38 million.
- 127 Vaclav Havel *The Future of Central Europe* an address to the Polish Parliament 21 January 1990
- 128 They became household names around the same time as Emin, Harvey and Hirst with the *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy, after

which the British public became very difficult to shock or even offend.

- 129 Rauschenburg erased a De Kooning, and, particularly insane, deviant and nauseating, the crime novelist Patricia Cornwell destroyed paintings by Walter Sickert as she pursued a theory that he was the real Jack the Ripper. Unpalatable and repugnant it may be, yet buying the work one defaces makes it legal. "How is it that art matters so much that people should bother to destroy it? What is it about a work of art that arouses such passions? As I've always said, love of art and hate of art are two sides of the same medal." David Freedberg, professor of art history at Columbia University *New York Times* 31 October 2013
- 130 Goya's original title in English was "Fatal consequences of the Bloody War in Spain against Buonaparte and other Emphatic Caprichos". It is usually simply referred to as 'The Disasters of War'.
- 131 In 2008 the Chapman's exhibitions were held at the White Cube Gallery at Mason's Yard in central London and in New York at L&M Arts at E78th Street in Manhattan. Roberta Smith reviewed 'Little Death Machines' at L&M Arts in the *New York Times* 'Art in Review' 30 May 2008. "A naughty-boy spirit still animates their art, but it seems tired now. You may wonder if the brothers will ever grow up (they're in their 40s) and whether, if they did, they'd have anything interesting to say."
- 132 The release in 2009 of the film *Antichrist* by the fashionable "prankster of world cinema" Lars von Trier produced outrage from critics. The film "plumbs new depths" they shouted while explaining "I haven't seen it myself, not shall I". (Christopher Hart *Daily Mail*) As they vented their spleen, called for a ban, expressed total condemnation and righteous indignation, as ever the critics helped the producers save on their publicity budget.
- 133 The title is "a way of devising a territory for the work where it cannot exist... If the tolerances of a liberal humanist culture want to speak about art but they find an art that has a title that cannot be mentioned then it does not have very good tolerance." They like to create friction. "The most interesting parts of the art world are where people have the most problems." Interview with the Jake and Dinos Chapman, BBC Radio 4, 29 May 2008
- 134 The exhibition included a series of 13 watercolours by Hitler, bought and defaced by the Chapmans; "annihilated" was the word used by the gallery in order to avoid criticism that the artists might in some way be "paying homage". Sadly, they have increased their value considerably. The Chapmans say they damaged things of historical value deliberately in order to see who would complain. Regarding the paintings by Hitler "What makes it interesting is that it will cause a huge range of paradoxical and anomalous conflicts about whether it is good to draw over something because it is evil, bad to draw over something evil or whether it will be reduced to an absurd notion of money" – paying money for work by the Nazi leader. As to whether the works are better or worse since they have been retouched is not the question. "If anything, we have attempted to deflate them." Asked as to whether they felt at all "uncomfortable coming into contact with this evil man" their reply was "I think we would have to question what evil means". Jake continued "If you permit notions of evil to exist, so that individuals are responsible, you allow that door open for the same thing to happen, unless you analyse and you find a better way of analysing how those things exist, where you recognise that more people are responsible, then those things don't happen. If you keep putting it down to individuals, if you keep using terms like evil, then you allow that thing to, to, you know this is just some kind of absurd, archaic Christian notion that has to be rectified, and us drawing on those pictures is a way of actually trying to draw attention to the fact that anti-Semitism, the racism and the fascism are more connected with social-historical processes than they are to do with the pathological symptoms of one individual." Interview with the Jake and Dinos Chapman, BBC Radio 4, 29 May 2008.
- 135 Appropriate as on the scale of human disaster, the Second World War produced even more death, destruction and suffering than the Black Death. The United States Atomic Energy Commission found that the Black Death came closest to mimicking all out nuclear war "in its geographical extent, abruptness of onset and scale of casualties".
- 136 By contrast, Gerhard Richter, unarguably one of the world's greatest living artists, and someone who has been collecting photographs for his compendium of source imagery known as *Atlas* since the early 1960s, has never used his images of concentration camps because he regards them as "unpaintable". Richter's mentally disabled aunt Marianne was killed in a Nazi euthanasia camp.
- 137 Brian Sewell 'Hell is first great work of the 21st Century' *Evening Standard* 6 June 2008
- 138 title of 'Jonathan Jones on Art' blog *Guardian* 25 June 2009
- 139 Nikolai Chernyshevsky 1828-89 *The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* 1855 in which he argues that art and literature should be "a textbook of life".
- 140 Attributed to Dorothy L Sayers
- 141 Gospel According to St Matthew 2:1
- 142 As an Archbishop disembarked on arrival in New York he was mobbed by journalists asking 'How do you plan to spend your stay?' 'What will you be doing?' 'Will you be visiting any night clubs?' 'Are there any night clubs in New York?' his Grace asked innocently. Headline next morning: 'First Question Religious Leader Asks On Touching Down: Are There Any Night Clubs In New York?'
- 143 There are storms and shipwrecks, bandits and deserts. Travel was not easy. It helped that Paul was self-supporting.
- 144 See the Acts of Apostles chapter 15, and the first chapters of the Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians.
- 145 Luke writing in Acts of the Apostles 7:57 "And casting him forth without the city, they stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul."
- 146 Paul wrote 'have nothing to do with myths and fairies'. Paul was no fairy. He was a man of fact, not simply faith. And he has been described as being so liberated he was even liberated from his own liberation. (Writing about a disagreement over eating meat, Paul said that there was nothing wrong with the meat, what was wrong was offending those who consider it wrong.) It was John Plamenatz (1912-1972), Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford, who stated "Liberty of conscience was born, not of indifference, not of scepticism, not of mere open-mindedness, but of faith". Bruegel was nothing if not faithful.
- 147 René Boumans 'The Religious Views of Abraham Ortelius' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol 17 3/4 1954 p 376
- 148 First used by Greene in an interview by John Cornwell for *The Tablet* 23 September 1989. Cornwell responded by questioning his meaning of agnostic, one who believes we cannot know that God exists thus denying the possibility of ultimate knowledge, whereas Greene also wished to participate in the sacraments and attend Mass. But for over 30 years Greene did not go to confession or receive communion. Like most of us he was far more vulnerable than he wished the world to see. Asked if he believed in communion as "the Real Presence in the Eucharist" Greene answered "I believe in it as a commemoration of what I think happened at the Last Supper".
- 149 Graham Greene *Collected Stories /A Sense of Reality* 1973 pp254-5, p65
- 150 Greene's interview with John Cornwell.
- 151 Acts of the Apostles 9:4
- 152 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 1:17 "For the justice of God is revealed therein, from faith unto faith, as it is written: The just man liveth by faith".
- 153 Motley (1900) *Rise of the Dutch Republic* taken online from The Project Gutenberg EBook 4814, January 2004
- 154 Motley - "no man had besieged so many cities... and no soldier, courageous as he was, ever attained to a more sublime indifference to calumny or deprecation... As a disciplinarian he was foremost in Spain,

- perhaps in Europe... As a statesman, he had neither experience nor talent. As a man his character was simple. He did not combine a great many vices, but those which he had were colossal, and he possessed no virtues. He was neither lustful nor intemperate, but his professed eulogists admitted his enormous avarice, while the world was agreed that such an amount of stealth and ferocity, of patient vindictiveness and universal bloodthirstiness, were never found in a savage beast of the forest, and but rarely in a human bosom... all hated the Duke, and shuddered at the arrival of the Spaniards. The day of doom for all the crimes which had ever been committed in the course of ages, seemed now to have dawned upon the Netherlands. The sword which had so long been hanging over them, seemed now about to descend. Throughout the provinces, there was but one feeling of cold and hopeless dismay. Those who still saw a possibility of effecting their escape from the fated land, swarmed across the frontier. All foreign merchants deserted the great marts. The cities became as still as if the plague-banner had been unfurled on every house-top. Meantime the Captain-General proceeded methodically with his work. He distributed his troops through Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, and other principal cities."
- 155 David Freedberg *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder* Tokyo 1989 catalogue
- 156 Epistle of St Paul to the Romans 1:20
- 157 The size of the picture, 108x156cm, the scale of the foreground figures and the strong perspective, the movement, the endless procession of soldiers, plus the low vantage point involves us, the viewer as participants in the action.
- 158 Max Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p28
- 159 Desperate times breed desperate ideas. If Christianity's most famous convert could become its most famous missionary, there might just be a hope, or at least something to pray for. People were indeed striving to build a new kind of congregation. Not in the least an emollient character, it was Paul the convert who struggled to help others understand that Christianity was not a lifestyle choice or membership of a club but a prototype human community. (Luke tells the story of the growth of Christianity as one inspired, directed and enabled by the visible experience of the Holy Spirit working through Paul, something 'falling', 'poured out', and 'given' to people.)
- 160 Walter Gibson *Bruegel* 1977 p178
- 161 Bruegel was living in Brussels, and despite Cardinal Granvelle, one of his major collectors and a counsel to the Regent, having been forced to leave in 1564, through Nicolaes Jonghelinck, Granvelle's confidant, Bruegel's patron, a staunch Catholic, and a friend of Philip II, the artist would have continued to have had access to news from Court.
- 162 Klaus Demus "This painting is therefore – and this is the only explanation for the painter's choice of the Alps – a symbolic visualisation of men going astray, losing their way and trapping themselves in plans that are as absurd as they are impossible; it is a metaphor for crisis, for wandering about aimlessly, from which 'conversion' means return." Quoted by Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones with the added comment "Is the painting a lesson in faith, in morality, a page of philosophy? No doubt." *Pieter Bruegel* 2002 p141
- 163 Hippolyte Délaroché let out the cry in 1839 'la peinture est morte!' on seeing the first daguerreotypes in Paris. With the death in 2011 of Cy Twombly, Lucian Freud, and Richard Hamilton, the question has been asked: who takes on the role of, in Braque's phrase, the 'guarantor of painting'? To my mind the answer is that Richter had already been cast.
- 164 Robert Storr, introduction to the catalogue of *Gerhard Richter: 40 years of painting* Museum of Modern Art 2002
- 165 In his *Lecture on Nothing* John Cage said "I have nothing to say and I'm saying it" something that appealed to Richter who admired Cage's rigorous aesthetic philosophy. Richter on the other hand claimed to proceed 'from accident to accident', a good line if a difficult one to accept at face value. Despite claiming not to be a theorist he has, throughout his career, produced a wide variety of writings.
- 166 Having grown up in Nazi Germany and been to art school in the DDR, in a Dresden still under rubble, a life of uncertainty is understandable. (Richter's first application to the school was rejected. He was admitted two years later in 1952.) Having been to the first *Documenta* in Kassel in 1955, Richter went again in 1959 where he saw the work of Lucio Fontana, and Americans such as De Kooning and Pollock for the first time. In 1961 he travelled to Moscow. His train home made an unscheduled stop in East Berlin. He left his luggage, went home and collected his wife, travelled back to Berlin and escaped west on the u-bahn shortly before the *Berliner Mauer* was erected. (At the time one needed a permit to travel within the DDR but the u-bahn between the two parts of Berlin went unchecked. It was the easiest way to escape – if you could get into Berlin.) He then studied at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf where Beuys had just begun to teach. Very soon, within two years Richter was put off by the cult of personality surrounding some of his contemporaries, he said it was *Künstlerscheisse*, artist-bullshit. 25 years later, on 13.1.88 he would still write "Art is wretched, cynical, stupid, helpless, confusing – a mirror of our spiritual poverty, our abandonment, forlornness. We have lost big ideas, utopias, any sense of faith, anything that endows meaning". And on 24.10.90: "The much despised 'artistic scene of today' is quite harmless and friendly... Thus the 'art scene' is not despicable, cynical or without spirit but... is only a variation on a social game that fulfils needs for communication in the same way as sport." And today, when art is cool, fun, and fashion all wrapped up together – what does he think? That's entertainment!
- 167 Richter's official biography contains the statement regarding the 13 and the 16 years. His first exhibition after moving west, held in a furniture store in Düsseldorf, he called *Capitalist Realism*, a phrase later picked up to Richter's annoyance by the dealer Renée Block, and used to promote a group of artists.
- 168 Benjamin HD Buchloch quoted by Martin Hentschel *Gerhard Richter 1998/On Shifting Terrain: Looking at Richter's Abstract Paintings* p11 Anthony d'Offay, London 1998
- 169 Since 1981 he has occasionally indulged the ultimate joke of putting a mirror in an exhibition of his work.
- 170 Nietzsche is quoted in the introductory essay to the MoMA catalogue 2002 p13: "When we have to change an opinion about anyone, we charge heavily to his account the inconvenience he thereby causes us." The quote is from *Beyond Good and Evil – The Philosophy of Nietzsche* p83
- 171 Richter and his student friend Konrad Lueg exhibited themselves as living sculptures dressed in suits and ties in 1963 – seven years before Gilbert & George dressed in suits and ties sang their way to fame and fortune with *The Singing Sculpture*.
- 172 Michel Leight, www.thecityreview.com/richter.html
- 173 Glenn Lowry, foreword to the 2002 MoMA catalogue p7
- 174 ibid
- 175 ibid
- 176 Michel Leight, www.thecityreview.com/richter.html
- 177 The church in San Giovanni Rotondo in Puglia, designed by Renzo Piano, is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Padre Pio (Francesco Forgione). Completed in 2004, it is the second most-visited Catholic shrine in the world.
- 178 The design is based on his earlier painting, a 64 by 64 grid of squares, *4096 Farben* that in turn was based on the colour palette of printing inks, the colours a substitute "for the refused or impossible picture". (4096 is also the number of web-smart colours that display consistently on older computer screens, a limitation some designers still take into account.) Richter worked with a glass company, Dextr, to develop a procedure that enabled him to work without traditional lead joints to combine the component parts in a demonstration of seamless colour. Kimberly Bradley on artnet.de digest pointed out that Richter's colour chart abstractions were produced at a time as "an assault on the falsity and religiosity of the way people glorified abstraction, with such phony

- reverence". Ten years later the professed atheist with Catholic leanings had softened, "I'm less antagonistic to 'the holy' these days. It's part of us, and we need that quality".
- 179 There are in fact three clerestory windows in the cathedral dating from around 1300 that have a similar grid design.
- 180 *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* nevertheless found a confidant of the Archbishop, Cardinal Meisner, saying he opposed it.
- 181 *Der Spiegel* 27 August 2007
- 182 For the constantly dwindling band of survivors, the Jewish imperative "write and record" – a command attributed to the historian Simon Dubnow who was shot dead in Riga in 1941 at the age of 81 – has been a major factor in making sure that as many experiences as possible should be left for future generations. One might make that 'paint and record' and use it as an epitaph for Bruegel.
- 183 A favourite theme of Elizabeth Gaskell; see *Mary Barton* 1848 chapter 24, and *North and South* 1855, chapter 7
- 184 Clark was commissioned by the BBC in 1969 to show what colour could bring to an 80,000 mile tour around the world's culture. It was a pioneering event, 13 episodes that showed television could work as a serious medium. I could not understand the excitement the series aroused. I was 20, at art school, overly-assured in my opinions on art, and much preferred John Berger. I still do. My abiding memory was of this man who certainly did not lack confidence or pedagogic intent, dominating the screen while delivering an erudite lecture standing beside a field of wheat, with Chartres just, but only just, visible in the distance. Personality was about to become all, presenters seemingly more important than their subject, and television's approach to art seldom changed since, with sadly all too few notable exceptions. Television made Clark famous way beyond the confines of the art world but he had been (lightly) fingered by a successor at the National Gallery: "Kenneth Clark was the key figure in the history of the involvement of museums in Old Master loan exhibitions" Nicholas Penny introduction to Francis Haskell's *The Ephemeral Museum* 2000 p xii. Haskell's last book was completed and seen into production by Penny – a book that questions the value of endlessly shipping masterpieces around the world to exhibitions for economic and political impact. "Miles above us jets speed through the skies carrying their freight of Titians and Poussins, Van Dykes and Goyas. Below, meanwhile, curatorial staff in museums and galleries scattered over much of Europe and the United States are supervising the transfer of pictures that usually hang on their walls to inaccessible and crowded storage rooms and are busy preparing large new explanatory labels. Accountants are checking the impact likely to be made on this year's budget deficit and are deploring the failure to settle for Monet or Van Gogh... the holding of an Old Master exhibition to commemorate the centenary of an artist's birth or death has become a moral imperative – to be neglected at the cost of scholarly and public opprobrium."
- 185 Annette de Vries 'Mediating Diligence. Bruegel's Months: Between Pictorial Tradition and early Modern Reception' *Cultural Mediators: Artists and Writers at the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy 1450-1650* Groningen Studies in Cultural Change XXXI Annette de Vries (ed) 2008 pp127-146
- 186 *ibid* p2 Just as Falkenburg analyses the potential mediating role of religious vignettes in the *Months*, De Vries considers the role of Bruegel in "the representation and reception of early modern views on societal phenomena and the mediating role of the artist in this process".
- 187 Blaise Pascal *Thoughts* Section VI *The Philosophers* 353 and see *Harvard Classics* vol48 part 1 transl WF Trotter 1909-14
- 188 Bertolt Brecht *The Life of Galileo* the remark spoken by Galileo "echoes Brecht's own dictum: 'scepticism moves mountains.'" Kenneth Tynan *The European Theatre* 1956, included in *Tynan on Theatre* 1964 p259
- 189 *Landscape with the Parable of the Sower* oil on panel 73.7x102.9cm Timken Art Gallery, San Diego. This is a controversial attribution, although Lorne Campbell accepts the signature. When it was bought in 1924 by the Antwerp collector Fernand Stuyck del Bruyère it was considered to be by Joos de Momper. Silver considers it the "first secure signed and dated work" 2011 p41, and points out that "the figure of Jesus is not recognizable on the riverbank" p126. Philippe and Françoise Robert-Jones list the main opinions (De Tolnay (1935), and Marijnissen (1988) are both doubtful; Friedländer (1937), Jedlicka (1938), Glück (1951) Delevoy (1959), Van Puyvelde (1962), and Gibson (1967) believe it to be authentic). The artist inserted the religious subject "ostensibly *en passant*" (Sellink 2007 p111 referring to Matthew 13:3-9) The date of 1557 causes some confusion (it has also been dated 1559) as it is very different to the earliest works unanimously attributed to Bruegel. It relates more closely to the engravings of Alpine landscapes of 1555-6, and *The Flight into Egypt* of 1563.
- 190 Gospel According to St Mark 4:11-12 the parable of the sower
- 191 Gospel According to St Matthew 13:15 "...and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

7

Bearing Witness Beyond Witnesses

A nation's history is personal

In the Shadow of Evil: *The Massacre of the Innocents*

Entr'acte Faith and fear in the Holy Land

Faith and Fear: *Procession to Calvary*

Entr'acte Barnett Newman

Foreign Affairs – a Roman Holiday

The world according to Bruegel – believing is seeing



186 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina

A nation's history is personal

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a Heaven for?" Robert Browning¹

TTO BORROW a phrase from F Scott Fitzgerald, there are no second acts, but Hieronymus Cock believed Bruegel could buck the trend. He had him cast as Bosch Redux. But it was a role Bruegel was only prepared to play for so long. Samuel Beckett might have been right about the fundamental tension between human frailty and the expressive instinct of human culture. "If you get down to the disaster," he once observed, "the slightest eloquence becomes unbearable." But it has never kept humans from seeking refuge in art and turning to it in attempting to comprehend tragedy.

Faced with life in the Spanish Netherlands this is what Bruegel did. Consideration of unrealisable ideals has been possible only when the historical reality of situations appears to offer no way out. Like Bosch, Bruegel lived in one of those times. The modern world had been inaugurated by opposing utopian dreams put forward in his lifetime. But there was no use attempting to escape, to dream about imaginary states, when the one you lived in was fighting for survival.²

Lex orandi lex credendi they used to say in the days when most Catholic priests could conduct a perfectly decent conversation in Latin.³ It refers to the early Christian tradition that the way you pray, determines what you believe, hence it touches people's faith. As patterns of worship change, so will their underlying beliefs, even minor changes leading to unforeseen and unintended changes in belief. Prayer is very intimate, nevertheless *lex orandi lex credendi lex vivendi* – the way minds and souls are orientated in worship orientates the way lives are lived, meant that intimate experience was also being challenged as never before. It was a story Bruegel wanted to tell, but he had to find a safe way of telling it. Man was changing and so was art.

As to second acts, Pieter Bruegel led a dynasty of four generations spanning over 150 years, starting with Pieter the Younger known as 'Helschen' or 'Hell Brueghel', and Jan the Elder called 'Fluweelen' or 'Velvet Brueghel', that tried to meet the insatiable desire for his work. Based on the laws of supply and demand this was nothing new – but it was in its magnitude. Along with all the copiers and the forgers, they were not quite so illustrious. Nevertheless, a highly lucrative market existed and the family chose to service it, and tried to monopolise it, with a large workshop. Before getting to that, it is necessary to look more at the man who worked alone, their father.



187, 188 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Massacre of the Innocents* (detail and infra red photograph) Hampton Court



189 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Massacre of the Innocents* Hampton Court



190 Pieter Bruegel the Younger (?) *The Massacre of the Innocents* Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



191 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Census at Bethlehem* Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique

In the Shadow of Evil: *The Massacre of the Innocents*

"What rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

William Butler Yeats

DEATH WAS battering at the door, the killing underway, another village turned upside down by soldiers, there on behalf of Philip II to punish heresy, to set an example of what happens when provinces revolt. 'A troop of armoured horsemen form a tight, compressed mass, black against white snow; they wait in patient menace while foot soldiers with pikes and battering rams bash in the doors of houses and drag villagers into the main square. Women sit weeping in the snow. A man is on his knees, begging mercy from well-dressed cavalry officers who seem faintly amused by it all.' Heavily armoured troops watch as their colleagues snatch the innocents from their parents. Pikemen stab at a pile of babies to be sure they are dead. They are violently desecrating souls. Mothers scream out; some faint in their grief. A mercenary hacks away. 'Snow blankets the steep rooftops, ice seals the pond; indoors, by the red glow of the hearth, faces flushed with beer, men doubtless debate the meaning of scripture and a king's rights. Horses' hooves can be heard thundering into the frozen village square, soldiers are yelling.'⁴ As a mercenary kicks down the inn door he dislodges an icicle that will fall on his head like divine vengeance. In 1604, Van Mander took a great deal of trouble over describing precisely what he saw, with more detail than for any other picture: describing families begging for the lives of their children, it had many "werkelijkke dinghe" – 'true to life details'. Not known for his liking for religious or political overtones in art, he still sets out clearly what he saw.

Two versions of one composition, both damaged, neither signed nor dated, have all lead to repetitive arguments as to provenance and meaning.⁵ Shortly after the birth of Christ, Herod, King of Judea, having met the Magi and learned of a potential challenge to his throne, ordered the wholesale murder of all the young male children under two years old in Bethlehem⁶ – the first Christian martyrs. Following instructions from an angel sent by God, Joseph and Mary left before the massacre took place and 'retired into Egypt'. Historically accurate or not, dozens or thousands were believed to have been slaughtered. Bruegel relocates the story in a Flanders village blanketed under snow; premeditated murder, random destruction and mayhem ensue, watched over by a phalanx of mailed horsemen sealing off any escape. It is like looking at a medieval freeze-frame equivalent of Lidice or Oradour-sur-Glane. Local thugs augment the regular forces: Lansquenets (German mercenaries decked out in coloured tights and slashed leggings), an imperial herald whose tabard once bore the Habsburg eagle, the red-coated gendarmerie, and knights in armour. Their identity is unclear. But the standard held by a soldier displayed five gold crosses on a white ground before it was overpainted, the arms of Jerusalem, and the logo of the self-styled King of Jerusalem, Philip II. Similarly, the herald represents both the Roman Empire of Augustus Caesar that failed to stop Herod, and that of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II who failed to stop Alva. This mix of forces thus matches the biblical story, Herod acting unilaterally without the knowledge of the Roman governor. Alva did not become governor until after the date when it is believed this picture was produced. It may be prophetic, like the totalitarian regime in Kafka's *The Trial*, or it may well be that the violence before Alva's appearance was suitably violent enough, his arrival (together with his reputation for brutality) was imminent, and if he was not clearly identified in the first painting, the younger Brueghel ensured he was in the remake. To paraphrase Spinoza, 'Don't just stand there and cry. Understand.'

At some point in the picture's history, the infants that are shown being thrown about, slaughtered, mourned by screaming mothers, were replaced by packages and animals – a

transformation that made the painting's hidden meaning clear. The owner, shocked by Bruegel's realism asked for the 'innocents' to be concealed, and thereby accidentally exposed what this painting is really all about: the sack of a village during Spain's violent repression of Protestant Netherlandish rebellion. Elements that have come and gone with various copies and over-painting include the imperial insignia on the herald's tabard, and the crosses on the standard similar to the arms of Jerusalem.⁷

This painting is usually dated between 1565 and 1567. 1566 is the year most often ascribed to it, believable both on grounds of style and climate. The winter of 1564-5 was especially severe. The year 1565 saw the coldest winter anyone could remember. The world turned white, birds froze, trees died, next year's harvest was dead in the ground, the old and young faded away. It was a shock verging on catastrophe, and a foreboding. This seemed to be more than just a cold winter. The climate was changing, and that is what Bruegel recorded.⁸ For a couple of years Bruegel seems to have been fascinated with winter – he kept returning to it. "Climate change is an ignored player on the historical stage".⁹ Bruegel certainly made the most of it.

But neither he, nor Patinir, was a Flemish Georgic attempting to emulate Virgil to convey the essence of nature and mankind's relationship to it. Nor did they produce images to seduce audiences by their depiction of the weather. In the case of Bruegel, however, weather has always been a selling point, as it was for later generations of landscape painters: "Nature in her different aspects, benign in Spring, rich in summer, sombre yet fruitful in Autumn, and cruel in Winter".¹⁰ Enveloped in the mists of time, the impact of climate on art develops differently under blue skies or grey. To summer's haze and autumn's mist, during the Renaissance, the grandeur and power of nature added falling temperatures that cast a blanket of snow over Europe. It was the Little Ice Age – and people were terrified the Earth would freeze over. Mountains are not that common in the Low Countries but snow scenes became one of the delights of European painting and at Christmas they were everywhere as flinty precipices rose up beyond a frosted valley, church and houses muffled white, children wrapped up like balls, skating on frozen ponds, in homely pictures that were particularly applicable: they indicate climate change. Other genres of painting originate in antiquity, but the depiction of snow originates here, and with one terrible winter in particular. Bruegel invented the snow scene.

He made another set of three pictures, this time united under snow.¹¹ *The Massacre* has frequently been seen as a companion piece to *The Census at Bethlehem (The Payment of Tithes)* painted in 1566 and even *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* from 1563 (not 1567 as generally thought and making it a possible companion of *The Flight into Egypt*, a painting of virtually the same dimensions from the same year, (signed and dated, but not set under snow) and painted in the same loose manner).¹² These are all paintings about early stages in the life of Christ.¹³ Two other paintings about this time in Christ's life, both known as *The Adoration of the Magi*, one in the National Gallery,¹⁴ signed and dated 1564, is unusual in that it is Bruegel's only vertical panel, devoid of landscape, painted in a very different style, consisting only of large-scale figures; and one in Brussels,¹⁵ unsigned and undated, damaged, badly restored, generally in poor condition – is generously described as a 'wreck', and equally inconsistent with the artist's work in that it is in tempera on canvas (one of only four in existence – if it is real) in a style and technique at variance with most of his work.¹⁶ There are so many copies of the Brussels picture that it suggests this is yet another copy of a lost original. This particular picture has been variously dated between 1555 and 1568, with suggestions that it is an early work comparable with a number of drawings, and another late work in the same medium.¹⁷

To the extent that the *Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* gives greater prominence to the weather than to the subject matter, snow was falling for the first time in the history of Western painting as Bethlehem is in the grip of winter. Looking at the fallen snow, the erasure of detail,

the disappearance of perspective, the action partly obscured by falling snowflakes, Bruegel saw the disengaging visual quality of snow, an insight that has visual consequences.¹⁸ Wonderful and frightening at the same time, the Little Ice Age was a naturally caused phenomenon and humanity, feeble in the face of nature, could only try to adapt. Surviving winter is part of what makes us human. Bruegel's paintings are not just prophecies. They are recipes of adaptation, illustrating new ways to live with the cold: how to inhabit it, even enjoy it. Ice and snow turn the world upside-down. In Bruegel's paintings, the very chill that threatens life provokes vitality. People do not just shiver in the snow. Climate makes history just as surely as economics. *The Census at Bethlehem* combines them both. While adults huddle miserably, children skate and sledge on the ice, and people are queuing up in the snow.

Bethlehem is snowed in. A chilly panorama of Mary and Joseph lining up to pay their taxes in order that their rulers could wage war on them, the subject of *The Census* is so unusual as to be unique at the time (it was not painted again until the next century) that there must be a specific reason why Bruegel should consider it. Resentment at the taxes being imposed by Spain even before the arrival of Alva and his fiscal innovations was an issue that united everyone.¹⁹ (The eagle sign on the inn in *The Census at Bethlehem* is a detail of Habsburg imperialism comparable to the arms of Jerusalem in *The Massacre*.) If Bruegel is as topical as we believe then it is not unreasonable to assume that the tax burden is what prompted this picture.²⁰ The popularity of the picture evinced by the number of copies made in the half century after his death indicates that the contemporary relevance of the image would not have been lost on Bruegel when he first painted it.²¹

The Massacre of the Innocents in Vienna is usually thought of as a copy that for a long time was considered to have been retouched in part by Bruegel.²² It is the version in London that later belonged to Rudolph II that has been altered, where the massacre has become a scene of plunder with the transformation of the children into animals to mitigate someone's feelings at the sight of the original suffering, and may well be the original.²³ There are in fact 14 others.²⁴ Visual censorship has made it harder to read the original but the copies, often by Pieter the Younger, make this savage image set in a deceptively attractive Flemish village comprehensible.

In all but the Hampton Court version of the painting the horsemen are led by someone in black armour who sports a distinctive long, pointed, grey beard that everyone seems to think is Alva, in part because the fashion was for the square cut shorter beard. The Hampton Court version has the commander's face lost in shadow with no evidence of a beard. Black was 'fashionable' Spanish court dress, so why zoom in on the armour? Black armour was not that unusual, but the beard really was rather like the identifying marks we used to have to enter on our passports.

Bruegel was a prudent man. He had to be. Whereas Pieter Brueghel the Younger was not known for being inventive. Put those two things together and we arrive at David Kunzle putting forward the intriguing theory that when Bruegel the Elder's painting was copied, Brueghel the Younger refined a number of details, such as resolving the question of Alva's beard, so unusually shaped and so identifiable, that his father would not have dared to produce so obvious a portrait.²⁵

Alongside the lancers are horsemen wearing the red uniform of the *Bandes d'ordonnance*, or *Benden van ordonnantie*, the local gendarmerie. Red was conspicuous in Habsburg armies, and seen in Bruegel's *Calvary*, like a close encounter of the frequent kind. The military are there in the *Conversion of Saul*, in the 36 copies of *The Adoration of the Magi* in the Snow that omit the falling snowflakes but include soldiers, again in *Calvary*, and here again in the *Massacre of the Innocents*, they are omnipresent in these pictures, a focus for our attention.²⁶

The date of *The Massacre* is important, but perhaps to the surprise of many who have written with such certainty about this picture, it is not all important. Because those who have

previously seen this as political and wished to reinforce their view by identifying the figure at the head of the cavalry as Alva, they have been criticised on the grounds that Alva did not arrive in Brussels until August 1567. This is to miss the point that repression had been underway for years by the time of Alva's arrival. State-sponsored persecution had been a fact of life from c1520 when Lutheranism established a foothold in Antwerp. The religious intolerance that followed reorganisation of the diocesan structure in 1559 by Philip II in order to increase state control over inquisitorial operations led to enormous public resistance. He struggled to dam up his people, but in the end he was damned by them. Alva's mission was to intensify the executions and drive the violence against Protestants to a new extreme. The specific horrors perpetrated in the name of the King and the Church were no different to before, but under Alva's command they increased in scale to unimaginable levels.

Children had been tortured in front of their parents by sadistic inquisitors for years before Alva, 264 people were burnt at the stake in the years 1561-64.²⁷ The killing of religious innocents was an escalating part of the political landscape from the 1520s onwards – in other words since Bruegel's own childhood. Alva simply implemented the policy, being more ruthless and more efficient at slaughter than anyone could ever imagine. The first Lutheran victims in the Netherlands were burned at the stake in Brussels in 1523. Failure to denounce heretics was punishable by death from 1529. Beheading was reserved for those who chose to recant. Motley gives William of Orange's own estimate of 50,000 executed before 1565.²⁸ He also details a legal manual of 1554 that recommended the torture of children in front of their parents and vice versa.

Alva plugged the loopholes in the system. He took over where 'Saul the persecutor', one Peter Titelmann, the Dean of Ronse left off, a man whose reputation for arbitrary justice and cruelty was as bad as any, and 'Flemish Alva', Philip of Noircarmes responsible for the sack of Valenciennes and the massacre at Oosterweel near Antwerp, where around 3,000 were slaughtered – a 'hunt not a battle'. At the battle of Jemgum a year later Alva's army killed 7,000 for the loss of just 80 troops. It was only a question of degree and scale. No one, not least a well-connected Bruegel, needed to have seen Alva at work to know what was in store for the Netherlands. No one was safe. The death squads were arriving and the Low Countries were to be their killing fields.

The promised lands of Burgundian rule on which the rest of Europe had gazed with envy had given way to an occupied territory with heavy taxation, authoritarian rule, economic ruin, that was on the road to revolution. Introduction of a large military force drove even the moderates into the arms of the rebellion. What had once been a theatrical state that revelled in the imagery of power and grandeur, home to conspicuous consumption on an unprecedented scale, was reduced via the opening up of a religious chasm to a land of restrictions and resistance, revolt and repression. The maelstrom was on the horizon long before 1567. The political was now personal.

Bruegel may not have lived to see the worst effects of the Spanish suppression of Protestantism – but we contend that he saw enough. This is political art at its most powerful and timeless. A panorama of horror set in a village shrouded under a soutane of heavy snow, in winter beauty, geese flying overhead, is a genuine Dutch genre painting. Stand and look at this painting, a badly disfigured and retouched original, maybe not even that, it is stark, no explanation, no pedagogic flummery, history dissolves to be replaced by timeless grief. Like the greatest of images, it is an anguished account of the impossibility of finding a meaning or a pattern in the world to which we are chained by our physical natures.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS is not a grand visual metaphor. It is straightforward reportage. History and art intersect right here at this point. Bosch has been left behind. By overlaying the religious struggle with political circumstances Bruegel produced a complex piece of multiple imagery.

The gallows came to signify not sin but martyrdom. "The sprouting of gallows in mid-16th century, and increasingly in the 1560s on the hilltops of *Ways to Calvary* and in *Crucifixion* scenes accompanying the traditional crucifixes, carried a very different association. Bruegel's *Triumph of Death* and *Way to Calvary* bristle with gallows that have reminded some scholars of contemporary executions of heretics. The commonplace punishment of hanging had a strictly contemporary reference; virtually no traditional Christian martyrs suffered thus. The spectacle of heretics dying in the innocence and with the courage of Christ but in the manner of the worst common criminals, was particularly shocking."²⁹

Kunzle sees Philip II as Herod, a foreigner in, and to, the Netherlands, unable or unwilling to speak anything but Spanish despite living there for five years, who showed nothing but contempt for the local hierarchy, punished iconoclasm, and "stole the treasures of his people".

The strength of feeling that Kunzle brings to his arguments is reflected to a lesser degree in many contemporary critics. Flying in the face of this reassessment as to Bruegel's contemporary relevance Colacicchi saw "critics who, compelled to solve many a puzzle in order to explain their meanings, have ended in seeing political allusions in almost every one of them" – ie. the paintings.³⁰ This denial of any visual expression of interest on the part of Bruegel in either the religious or political events in his time, a keen observer of life if he was anything, is surprising.

Since 1891 scholars have suggested some political connotations in the *Massacre*.³¹ Ferber sees the dating of the work as critical.³² I am not so sure. Ferber makes the point that the dates are uncertain for both the *Census* and the *Massacre*. He sees them as companion pieces (Friedländer calls them "pendants") and writes about the compositional devices used by Bruegel to draw attention to "the only person in the entire scene dressed totally in black" including "one knight to the right of the group [of mounted knights] carries his lance at an angle pointing directly to a banner floating over the head of the figure in black... the man who presides over the horrendous scene of the massacre".³³

Identification of Ferdinand Alvares, Duke of Alva, relies on the cut of this man's beard and his predilection for wearing black. Coincidence? A single, black clad horseman appears among the colourful multitude of soldiers in Bruegel's *Conversion of Saul*. Again, he commands our attention, far more than the painting's subject, Saul. Coincidence? Following a suggestion of Irving Zupnick, Ferber suggests parallels between Alva and Saul as he sees both "as defenders of orthodoxy against incursions of heretic beliefs... involved in missions designed to maintain the hegemony of their Faith in the face of internal and external rebellion" and believes Bruegel may have produced the painting in the hope that the Spaniard "might receive a vision similar to Paul's". Thus Ferber sees the *Massacre* as Bruegel's reaction to Alva's arrival in the Netherlands, pointing to the villagers begging for mercy to a cavalier "clothed in a doublet with the double-headed Habsburg eagle on it" to signal the different approach of the Austrian and Spanish regents. Thus resolution of the date is fundamental to Ferber's arguments. More than equal to this, Albert Deblaere SJ attempts to demolish any political reportage in Bruegel by relying exclusively on historical data matched against presumed dates for the paintings.³⁴ He says "people's ignorance of history may be exploited" to give a political "slant" to the paintings not realising he exposes his own ignorance in so doing. However, countering Deblaere, in searching for visual metaphors, Friedländer has "The master rummaging through the Bible texts for violent and warlike incidents to transpose into his own time, a time that was itself full of

threatened disaster”.³⁵

Another reference in the gospels to military abuse is Luke’s account of the preaching of St John the Baptist.³⁶ Unusual as it was, Pieter Bruegel painted this scene, inspired by the Calvinist hedge-preaching of 1566 that began the iconoclasm and resistance movement which in turn provoked Philip II to send Alva.³⁷ (The painting is related “thematically and chronologically” to *The Massacre*, and for once it is dated.) Led as they were by unauthorised ministers, John the Baptist’s sacrifice in order to criticise the government appealed to Calvinists in the Netherlands. Added to which Calvin’s use of the Baptist’s sermon to denounce Catholic tyranny, fiscal extortions and military abuses, made this a very potent image.³⁸ Erasmus also brought the massacre of the innocents to bear on what was happening, before the worst of the excesses began: “Holland (like Rachel) wept for her children, and would not be comforted”. And he denounced those bearing false witness for financial gain, a process that later gained ground considerably under Alva. Thus *The Census*, *The Massacre*, and *The Preaching* are all of a piece, a political commentary in triplicate.

Taxation and ever-growing persecution found an outlet in Bruegel. Rare as it was before he painted *The Preaching* and common as it was afterwards, the military component in the images increased as the years went by. Bruegel made his point without any soldiers, although a possible pair of spies have been noted in the two sword-carrying men in the foreground. As the idea was painted more often, the soldiers gradually appeared. And in Italy, as the century became more and more submersed in warfare, so the subject became more popular.

If we agree the date of 1566 for *The Massacre* then we have a condemnation of Spanish practice before Alva, Bruegel made the point without him. And the only hint of criticism in *The Census* is the inn sign, the Habsburg eagle. Three paintings, three ways of carefully understating his case in one continuous growing “documentary of darkness”.

What does this all signify?

Think about the audience.

Absence is presence in Bruegel. What is withheld is implicitly as important as that which remains veiled. Bruegel is a master of omission. The passionate artist is concealed under the paint. Bruegel’s journey in faith may have been as fearful as that of most of his countrymen, but with his connections, the dangers were greater and closer. Religious intolerance and extreme cruelty were in evidence outside the front door. Antoine de Saint Exupery once wrote that ‘what is essential is invisible’. In that he echoed the apostle Paul who wrote that the things we see are transient, but the things we do not see are eternal. Unseen and imperishable, Bruegel’s essentials might have listed love, hope, freedom, and God for starters. In order to understand what is essential we must invest in things that do not fall apart, or as Jesus put it: “provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted.” Strip away what is unimportant to gain true riches.

A massacre of innocents without children, a painting without meaning, a horror disappeared away, a doctored image, the one we see at Hampton Court, and now considered to be the only genuine Pieter Bruegel, what is revealed is just as important as what is withheld. If something is withheld, or hidden, or covered up, especially if the original artist did it, we can be sure there is a good reason. The sensitivity of the audience is unlikely to be a compelling reason. “Hemingway says somewhere that the good writer competes only with the dead”³⁹ – the good painter Bruegel had to compete with growing piles of unburied dead... a vision of the ‘eternal now’.⁴⁰

As the world changed rapidly during the lifetime of Bruegel, it was clear there was another way of looking at life. It involved a complete renewal of the way of thinking in order to see things through the eyes of those who dwelt in the upside-down kingdom of God.

St Paul says in his letters that it is something to do with God deliberately choosing those

who are powerless to shame those who are powerful, choosing things despised by the world in order to bring to nothing what the world considers important. Bruegel's world was turned upside down. The irrational upsidedown world of human affairs was reflected in his art.

Absence may also imply doubt. Once again, that doubt which defines faith. "When men change their religious opinions really and truly, it is not merely their opinions that they change, but their hearts." That can be slow, "... hard work, the changes proceed by fits and starts".⁴¹ For John Calvin certainty was uncertainty, believers had to be prepared for "a perpetual struggle with their own distrust".⁴²

In the middle of the 16th century it was important to feel at home in church. As Bruegel struggled with his journey in faith he looked for a hotel. The pictures can be read as Bruegel's religious travelogue. Whether he had a sense of direction on that journey is unclear. With Bruegel we are always walking in Christ's footsteps through Flanders and Brabant. We arrive at the junction of the divine and the human, the spiritual and the material, the Old and New Testaments. For Bruegel the Transfiguration was fundamental to Christianity: that defining junction. Transfiguration was the essence of his art, translating fact into his vision. A sense of wonder and horror coexist as we slip from the natural to the supernatural, the ordinary becomes strange and the strange ordinary, the commonplace transfigured. Just as the priest translates bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.



192, 193, 194 Pieter Bruegel the Elder – political comment in triplicate *The Census*, *The Massacre*, and *The Preaching*



195 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Flight into Egypt* London, Courtauld Gallery



196 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow*
Winterthur, Sammlung Oskar Reinhart 'am Römerholz'



197 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (?) *The Adoration of the Magi*
Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique



198 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Adoration of the Magi* London, National Gallery

Entr'acte

Faith and fear in the Holy Land

*"A nation is a group of people united by a mistaken view about the past and a hatred of their neighbours"*⁴³

BRUEGEL'S SUBJECT was faith and the nature of belief. Faith can be very elusive. If you are looking for faith today or rather if you want to understand a little about what it is that drives so many, you might consider visiting Israel. I did.

I first visited Israel not long after the Six Day War, and loved it: the people, the idealism, the landscape, everything; it was uplifting, invigorating, certainly different, and certainly special. The war that changed everything had not yet made its impact, the Bible to be read as a military operations manual unknown to the rest of the world, unappreciated and little understood. I lived for a month, working and studying with a Jewish religious community in a kibbutz on the edge of the Negev and learned a great deal. And then I travelled around from Be'er Sheva to Safed, from Tel Aviv to Tiberius, Jaffa to Jericho, and Jerusalem, Yad Vashem and the Via Dolorosa – your own cross to bear for just \$25.

That's the point, tacky shops, neon signs, the Way of Sorrows a carnival, along which I understand why Bruegel is timeless. A fun day out on the way to Calvary. Over the years I have revisited Israel several times, and each time it has become progressively more difficult to enjoy, and special in far less pleasant ways. I go because I want to see what it is like. Now I am an outsider in a passionate land, on point duty in a battlefield, in a car crawling its way slowly around the tank traps outside Ramallah, looking out from the Golan to Kuneitra, walking on top of Masada, passing Palestinian campsites...

"Are we where we live or are we what we think? What matters? Stones or ideas?"⁴⁴ Land has always mattered and if you have waited in the Wilderness for 40 years waiting for the Promised Land, a minority in everybody else's country, and because for centuries you have been regarded as strangers in any country – then land really is special. But.

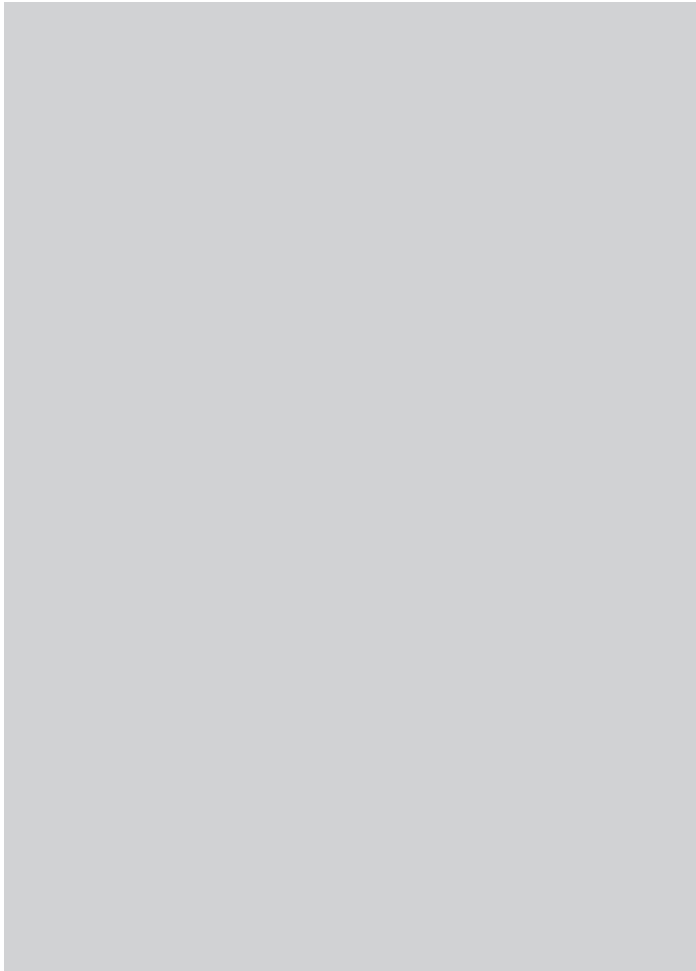
"You may need access to the Wailing Wall but do you need to own it?"⁴⁵ A history of expulsion may be good enough reason to need the illusion of stability that ownership brings. Yet it also brings an anomaly; for a people that has been ethnically cleansed from so much of the world, to be sitting poolside in the occupied territories like some Mediterranean Bel Air surrounded by barriers and armed guards looking out at the obscenity of tented refugee camps where Palestinians carry their water home in tin cans is unsettling, to put it mildly. A Zionism that only admits immigrants of one religious faith has a problem. After a 2000-year diaspora, the yearning to go home is understandable, but the inhumanity of those camps has to be seen to be believed. I was shocked that people who had suffered could condemn others to such treatment. "And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner."⁴⁶ The world progressively has developed an unforgiving view of Israel no longer affected by the Holocaust. What shapes the world's perception is not the crematoria but the checkpoints, not the trains but the settlements.

Auschwitz does not excuse anything, including religious justification for excessive behaviour. As a troubled gentile, I am today troubled by Israeli leaders, full of loud emotional blackmail, wielding the Holocaust in front of world Jewry as if the Jew as victim can do no wrong. Terrified of dissent and unwilling if not scared of negotiation, today they seem to have shut out those intellectual traits, so rightly revered, of non-conformity, of questioning the status quo, of challenging authority, to the extent that simple disobedience produces the strongest verbal response from a government spokesman.⁴⁷ Multiculturalism? "As long as young people feel they have got no hope but to blow themselves up you are never going to make progress."⁴⁸ It was Chaim Weizmann who said that 'it is by its treatment of the Palestinians that this country will be judged'.

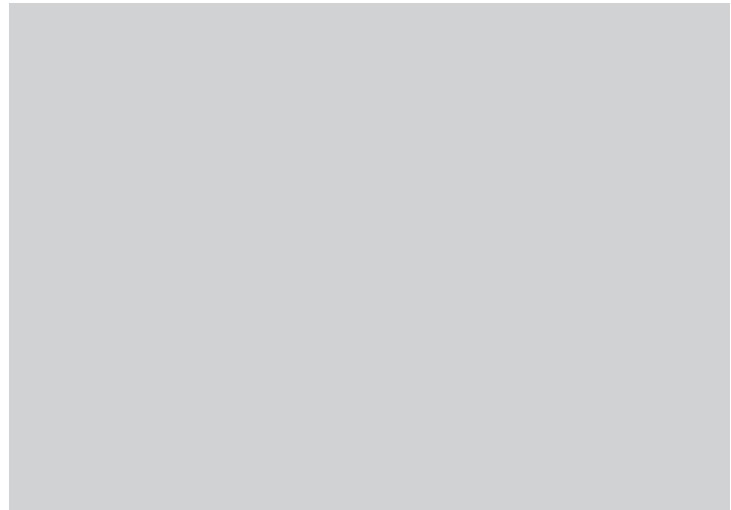
A country has to know its limitations. You cannot have it all. As the Talmud says, hold too

much and you will hold nothing. The Israeli dream of resettling the biblical heartland will be abandoned one day because, as even Ariel Sharon, "the man who does not stop at red lights" has acknowledged, "if we insist on fulfilling the dream in its entirety we are liable to lose it all".⁴⁹ That dream was always something special, an experiment in the realisation of a series of hopes and ideals, and its very existence one of the great achievements of Jewish history. Yet those hopes and ideals are fraying. "For as long as I can remember, I remember fear... For as long as I can remember, I remember occupation." There is both 'existential fear' and 'moral outrage'. "This start-up nation must restart itself." To some it appears that the country is coming apart. Was it ever thus: "What this nation has to offer, is not security or well-being or peace of mind. What it has to offer is the intensity of life on the edge."⁵⁰ Life on the edge has become the prospect of living in a pariah state that maintains an apartheid regime. People of faith can all too easily become fanatics of faith.

"There is only one way to defeat the Jews", Arafat told the Palestinians, "and that is to make ourselves bigger victims than they were".⁵¹



199 Jerusalem: the Via Dolorosa between the fifth and sixth station, looking east



200 Jerusalem: the Western Wall and barbed wire
11 November 2011 © Djampa

Faith and Fear: *The Procession to Calvary*

“War happens to people, one by one” Martha Gellhorn *The Face of War*

BEFORE EASTER had a meaning, it was an event. Bruegel tells the story, but he goes further than that. Bruegel's second largest painting tells two stories at the same time.⁵² First, it is a straightforward picture of Christ's Passion on a cold, damp springtime Friday, in which Jesus appears, lost in a teeming crowd of hundreds, carrying his cross from Jerusalem to Calvary, marked by the circle of an expectant crowd. Dwarfed by the expansive landscape, studded with gibbets and cartwheels on poles on which victims were exposed and left to die, Christ goes unrecognised. We are right in there with the crowd. Having a fun day out. A carnival day. The mood is one of happy anticipation. For some of the children it will be their first crucifixion. Everyone is all wrapped up in their own concerns or too inured to the sight of such things in the Netherlands to really notice what is going on. The crowd is uninterested, and the figure of Christ is hard to find. The significance of this particular crucifixion is lost on them.

But this painting also tells the story of the passion of Flanders in Bruegel's day, since Christ is here escorted to Golgotha by red-uniformed Spanish mercenaries, then fiercely imposing a repressive regime on the country. There is a windmill, oddly perched on top of a pointed rock, Bruegel's depiction of the 'cosmic mill' which, in the tradition of antiquity, was thought to grind the fates of men and nations.⁵³ The crowd is certainly enjoying its day out in this picture, but the forces of totalitarian rule are ever present.

In 1486 Pico della Mirandola planned in his oration 'On the Dignity of Man' to say "We have placed you at the centre of the world so that, from there, you can more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made you neither of heaven or earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honour you may fashion yourself in whatever shape you prefer, as though you were the maker and moulder of yourself". The speech was never delivered but his glorification of man placed in the mouth of God fell under a charge of heresy. As Bosch had also portrayed it, love of this world had meant people overlooked Christ in Heaven – they and we, certainly overlook Him here on Earth in the Bruegel.⁵⁴ This is a conventional three-distance formulaic landscape but it is brilliantly organised and tells us so much more than at first appears. There is the weather: it has been raining, the road is a mess, the sun has been out – a storm is gathering over Golgotha. There is the mob and human behaviour. No one helps Christ. Casual evil does not bother anyone here, it is an everyday occurrence. The priest shows no interest in Christ. He is busy with the thieves in the cart. The gawping crowd is absolutely indifferent to the fear and misery of the condemned.

Just how would we react in the circumstances to another death sentence being carried out this Friday on the edge of town – think Baghdad or Gaza only far worse? The walls of the city, the circle of the crowd, the overall grand sweep of landscape, the curving road, the cartwheel, the design makes you go round and round like the seasons of the year, the circles of the composition mirror the cycles of nature and life – the death of Christ merely another cycle ended.

'I was there' shouts the picture again. This is reportage. "Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" No feel-good factor here, but harsh political reality. Here the Cross lies at the crossroads of human suffering, pain and death, in a land under foreign occupation. Where is God when people suffer? In the face of so much horror and evil, people lose their faith. Yet for some, paradoxically, when faced with evil there is a realisation of God's closeness to them.

Elie Wiesel in his book *Night* tells of a boy punished by guards for stealing food. He was hanged on piano wire, while all the other prisoners were forced to watch: "For more than



201 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Procession to Calvary* Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

an hour the boy stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony before our eyes. We were all forced to pass in front of him, but not allowed to look down or avert our eyes, on pain of being hanged ourselves. When I passed in front of him, the child's tongue was still red, his eyes not yet glazed. Behind me a man muttered, 'Where is your God now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him, 'Where is he? Here he is. He is hanging here on this gallows'".

When the moment came, that is how it was in the Spanish Netherlands and for Bruegel. Christ the Netherlandish loser, down under the weight of the Spanish cross, hurts and weeps and bleeds and will die in a few awful hours. Far from inflicting suffering as a punishment, the God of retribution is about to demonstrate that he bears the grief and shares the sorrow of people on earth. He is no longer 'God up there' inscrutably allotting rewards and retributions, he is God down here, a God with us in the Netherlands.

WAS BRUEGEL REALLY an orthodox Roman Catholic? Does this painting mark a turning point in his beliefs? There can be no doubt that Bruegel meant his representation of the scene to have a particular reference to his own time. With the exception of Christ the figures wear contemporary dress. The figures of the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalen and another Mary act out their own drama in a corner, unnoticed by everyone else. Larger than the background figures and isolated from them, this group is set in a timeless world, removed from the contemporary scene, away from the excitement, the mob and the children eager for a bit of special fun. They are located on a slight rise overlooking the procession. Reminiscent of Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition* this group has profound significance reminding us of how momentous this moment really is. Christian sympathy coupled with an awareness of the significance of the day's events are really only evident here in the whole picture. Our Lady of Sorrows is prepared for the worst; 'the women of Jerusalem mourn for Our Lord' at the eighth station of the cross before He falls for the third time. But Bruegel's image also anticipates the Lamentation of the dead Christ at Vespers, once the holiest office in the day. It presents us with a contradiction. Nothing should distract Catholics from Mary mourning her Son. Here, everything distracts us from Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, each one of which traditionally deserves a Hail Mary to be said every day in her honour.⁵⁵

Again, Bruegel has expanded a traditional medieval tradition into something new. The strongest profession of faith in his profane worldview is an isolated group acting out their own drama; solemnly stylised, grieving, away from the direct observation of contemporary life on which they have a profound impact, they inhabit a timeless world of their own. Bruegel's world in miniature, a medieval world of glory and faith, brutality and guilt, with his passion for endless detail, has finally arrived in the Modern Age. His challenge is our challenge; an unorthodox Catholic adrift in a new world, he looks back to an earlier way to convey holy figures.

In a painting that we find at once timeless and conspicuously modern creating an image whose power to convey its terrible purpose continues to resonate, it clearly also belongs to an earlier ethos, speaking of optimism and faith in the value of sacrifice. The artificial placing of the holy figures mourning on a rocky foreground away from the drama, together with the insignificance of Christ among the crowds (compare Bruegel's *Sermon of St John the Baptist*) are familiar Mannerist devices from the previous century; Bruegel has copied a style from a hundred years before in order to make them remote and pious, idealised and sacred.⁵⁶

Bruegel gives us all the grandeur of Patinir with the microscopic detail of Jan van Eyck. The structure of the painting was not new, even the wheel-like movement had been used before.⁵⁷ There is a strong archaic element running through the work. By inverting the conventional formal relationship of the painting's sacred subject and its setting, and by creating an expansive panoramic landscape in which the figure of Christ is diminished in a mass of diversionary activity, Bruegel signals a move away from painting as a vehicle for contemplative

medieval piety to something very different, a new relationship of the individual to metaphysical truth. Combining the procession with a stunning landscape was a familiar device; Pieter Aertsen, Cornelis Massys, the Brunswick Monogrammist, Henri met de Bles all played the same game.⁵⁸ But it was Bruegel who chose to contrast the grief of Christ's family with the "callousness of the average man", the less we see of Christ, the greater the indifference to the greatest tragedy of Christianity, or understanding of its significance to mankind.⁵⁹ His contemporaries painted rather than experienced, that was Bruegel's triumph.

Did Bruegel adapt a traditional composition because the event was both solemn and religious and of great relevance to the time in which it was painted? Was it simply the easiest way to grab attention and to ensure people got his point? Or is it something else? Is his vision essentially of a world in miniature? The passion for endless detail, abrupt contrasts between literal and fantastic, mixing brutality, licentiousness and guilt; his whole way of seeing things was one that belongs to the dying medieval world. The seemingly straightforward seasonal panoramas belonging to the systematised descriptive tradition of medieval illuminated manuscripts, the painting is anchored in the collective imagery of early 16th century landscape. Falkenburg has argued the way in which we 'receive the image' is subjective, thus the beholder's personal insight and judgement of good and evil being the true subject of the painting.⁶⁰

By setting *The Procession* in such a grand arena, emotions are reduced, identification with Christ's suffering diminished, any possible intimacy compromised, and the overall divine predicament melts into space. Yet the spectacle of the suffering Christ hauling the Cross through profane earthly experience is no less a devotional image.

It is simply a new kind of devotional image, one where the biblical narrative unfolds across the panel as we contemplate the third station of the cross as symbolic enactment of the pilgrimage of life, all reinforced by the wheeling composition that asserts both the inevitability and continuity of the event.⁶¹ The greatest tragedy of mankind appears reduced to a mere sideshow: Christ falls but is just one spectacle among many for the excited crowd to gawp at. As is the commotion around Simon of Cyrene whom the officers are pressuring to help with carrying the cross as his wife tries to hold him back, 'don't get involved!' – her rosary swaying against her apron. Christ's insignificant presence in the crowd only serves to confront us with a moral choice: would we be cheering the soldiers on, gloating on violence and retribution, or one of that miserable group of bewildered losers, the disciples, who ran away?

The tension created by wrenching a venerated devotional image from its conventional format, and absorbing it seamlessly into a grand sweep of over 500 relatively unconcerned people in which Christ all but disappears in the multitude, results in a *coup de théâtre* for the secularisation of the sacred image. It is a challenge to find Christ just as it is to find Paul in *The Conversion of Saul*, something John Updike considered Bruegel's point: "God's eyes see what ours cannot".⁶²

Just as the context in which the scene is placed (and in which the painting is viewed) inevitably determines its interpretation, so the hermeneutic act is radically impacted by Bruegel's presentation of the action. By incorporating Jesus' agony when falling under the Cross into a mass of detail surrounding the *cortège*, the result is no less unified and it is certainly no less emotional than a traditional object of mystical medieval piety. A series of orchestrated dramas attract us as our eyes scan the image. There is animated drama everywhere, each carefully placed to establish one great mosaic. All the elements interlock. The mundane nature of it all only increases the drama.⁶³

Our viewpoint is transitional, the crowd's is one of expectation, there is a dreadful inevitability about the main event. The idea is simple, the image complex, the scattered action entirely ordered, the gendarmerie's red tunics marking time across the canvas "like a trail of blood" unify the image, serving to make a point and the needs of art.⁶⁴ A red thread that takes

us through the picture similar to the group of red-coated *Bandes d'ordonnance* that appear in *The Massacre of the Innocents*. Bruegel may not have been "roaming the back streets of Brussels and the Marolles quarter, his fists clenched in his pockets, muttering curses" in Marijnissen's vivid phrase, but he was certainly aware that "the common people were oppressed and exploited, that the teeming, amorphous, cowardly masses were held in check by professional soldiers and mercenaries, the scum of society" whilst "he no doubt kept his ideas about their fanaticism, intolerance and brutal cruelty to himself".⁶⁵ The authority of the Church over the provenance, authenticity and use of religious imagery, is under attack. Bruegel was not the first to do this, but he was the most effective. In contrast with his predecessors, Bruegel pushed the location of Christ away from the immediate foreground thus drawing us into the event, and giving himself the opportunity to exploit his ability to convey everyone's behaviour on a fun day out.

Was he making a stand, is the image in any way anti-Catholic? It's doubtful. Yes, the Virgin Mary is turning away from the action to face us, but the grief and emotion of the women around her are clear, they are crying and upset at the suffering they can see and the prospect before them. By changing the experience of looking at such a picture devotional meditation was enhanced rather than endangered, the emotional charge of the story intensified not impoverished, and the potential for contemplation given a context in which it could only appreciate.

The time was at hand for a fundamental change in the nature of religious imagery, and in particular their part in meditation.⁶⁶ The world was changing dramatically, and with it the authority of God and man's relationship with both Him and nature. As the nature of belief changed so did the artist's response, and mankind's response to both. The burden of interpretation began its historical shift from the Church to the individual as the moral authority of the Church began to wane, and with it inevitably the use of devotional panels. The kaleidoscope had been shaken, the medieval cosmos was unravelling, and man personally responsible for his own actions, adrift in this new, uncertain and mysterious world. *The Procession to Calvary* is a reflection of all that.

Bruegel's biblical interpretation that makes use of an inverted compositional hierarchy, nevertheless includes one major variation from the new norm: he places Christ dead centre of the picture. His divine presence is no longer isolated like a medieval icon, He is with us in the real world, and with that one move, the 'period' inner vision has been transformed.

Christ's route across the panel to Calvary may appear a trivial and somewhat superficial factor in the dispassionate sweep of history, however, Bruegel reaffirms the central position of traditional iconic images, but no longer is the emotionally charged divine image there as a sacred presence on the material surface. We have moved from veneration to exegesis, from meditation to critical explanation and interpretation. The great wheel of space that turns through Bruegel's landscape rolls right across the timeless stability and certainty of the system of institutionalised belief. That certainty was now under threat, both from new religious experience and from art. Yet by placing Christ in the centre, He is clearly the one certainty Bruegel is still sure of in this new world. The fear that his painting expresses, however, is that we are condemned to repeat past mistakes, that if the events it portrays took place in the 16th century, then the Church would be as complicit in the crime as the Sanhedrin, and that Christ would have been condemned to death as a heretic by the Inquisition.

That is the accusation we face.

The man responsible for executing the increased religious intolerance demanded by Philip II since 1559 was also Bruegel's sponsor at court, Cardinal Granvelle. Granvelle was recalled from the Netherlands in March 1564, the year Bruegel painted *The Procession to Calvary*. This is not the picture of a Stoic as some have suggested, a dispassionate observer of a tragic spectacle, an artist seeking consolation in withdrawal and observation; this is the picture of a man involved in his

country's crisis of faith. Doctrinal struggle had become political struggle. Once Luther challenged the authority of the Church with all the historical certainties it enshrined, there was a growing conviction that mankind could master the world in which it lived.

Once again, man was changing and so was art.

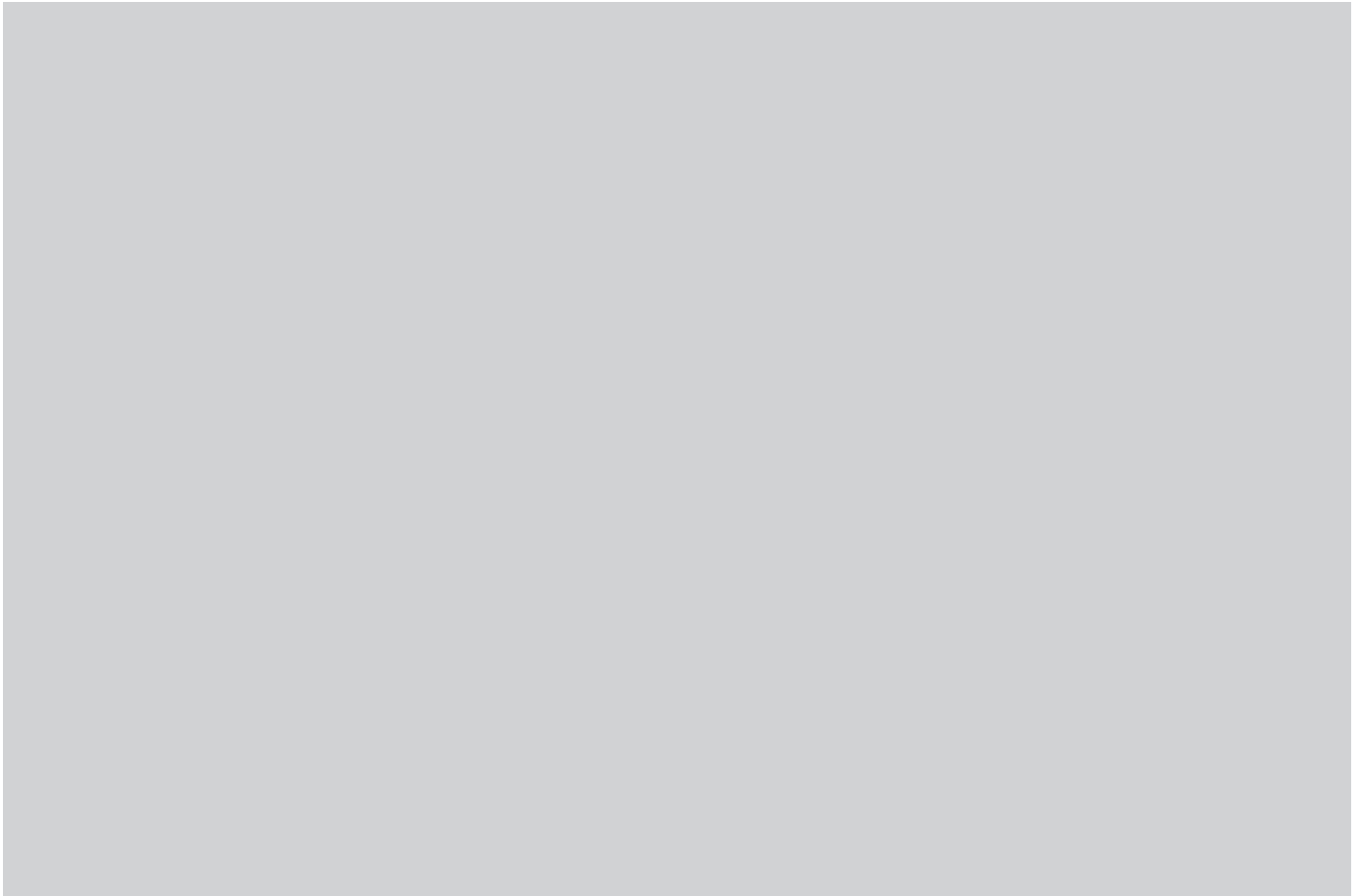
Crucifixion

The view has been expressed that the *Procession to Calvary* was not meant to be viewed as such, but as a *Crucifixion*, with the cross outside the painting at the place where the viewer stands.⁶⁷ A view that prompted the comment: "There is a fine but important borderline between the legitimate uses of a heuristic circle of interpretation, as Panofsky called it, and a simple 'circulus vitiosus'."⁶⁸ So let's turn briefly to the question of whether Bruegel did in fact ever paint a conventional Crucifixion.

The Procession to Calvary or *Christ Carrying the Cross* is the one painting of Pieter Bruegel the Elder that his sons never copied (see chapter 8). Yet Pieter Brueghel the Younger painted eight versions of a large format *Crucifixion* – eight versions of a picture with no known prototype.⁶⁹ It is an unusual composition: there are four crosses at Calvary.⁷⁰ Then there are probably two versions where, in an unprecedented move, Pieter II collaborated with another master who had his own studio: Joos de Momper the Younger.⁷¹ The only other time this may have happened was a collaboration with Frans Francken the Younger on a *Village Landscape with Pilgrims of Emmaus*. Francken the Younger created another variant of the *Crucifixion*. Jan Brueghel the Elder painted at least two versions that are different but contain some of the same motifs.⁷² There were others. Ertz lists a further 13 that he could not be sure about.⁷³ In the 17th century, Arnoldus Buchelius claimed to have seen the Bruegel original in Leiden, dated 1559.⁷⁴

The overall composition of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's versions vary from those on which he collaborated. Pieter II's huge panoramic views, massive rock formations, high elevated horizons and a distant view of the Jerusalem skyline with a grand, round Temple, give way to a more involving scene of foreground action in a less expansive landscape without the rock formations and a lower horizon line. The holy figures that are prominent in the *Procession to Calvary* always have to be looked for here. They are to be found gathered grieving in front of a small copse, except in one version.⁷⁵ Jan Brueghel has shown some innovation, combining elements of his father's picture that we can see today, including the swooning Virgin among holy figures on a small rise in the foreground, with colourful miniature details within a vast landscape. The confusion in the crowd of the *Procession to Calvary* has given way to an equally dramatic but far more conventional scene. His other version, now in Vienna, shows a much more reduced landscape and thus has a greater emphasis on the action.

Where did the idea come from? Was it an original composition by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, a copy of a lost original by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, a pastiche of a Bruegel, or a copy of someone else's work? The pictures feel derivative of Bruegel: they are Bruegelian in their unconventional portrayals of a traditional iconography, they have large interlocking crowds set in vast panoramas, display red tunics and capes of the gendarmerie, discreet iconographical markers, and a common touch, a boy relieving himself (that was later painted out). Georges Hulin de Loo considered the images composite of other images, thus figure groups from an original had been combined with Jerusalem from a lost *Procession to Calvary*, the rocks from yet another lost composition, and so on. Glück considered the whole thing an invention of Pieter II, Marlier reasoned another lost original as the basis, and Ertz thought it showed some creativity on the part of the son overlaid on a general idea from Pieter Bruegel.⁷⁶ The painting now in the Noordbrabants Museum may provide a clue.⁷⁷ Attributed by both Gibson and Ertz to an unknown Flemish master, it clearly has some relationship to, but is not the same composition as, the pictures by either of Bruegel's sons.⁷⁸ It is an outmoded design with its



202 Pieter Brueghel the Younger *Crucifixion* The Coppée Collection

map-like view of the Holy city as part of a *Weltlandschaft* from an earlier era with some wild rock formations, the three hours of darkness that preceded Christ's death welling up on the horizon.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, at its heart, it is strikingly similar in its configuration of the figures (including the boy taking a piss) to Pieter Brueghel the Younger's compositions. It has no fourth cross, but a pillory wheel is at the extreme left of the picture, similar to those visible in the *Procession to Calvary*.

An altogether darker scene is portrayed in the version in Paris attributed to Pieter the Younger. The fortified town shown here has been compared to a drawing of a city sprawling across a hilly landscape in the British Museum by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, the general layout of the landscape corresponds with the other versions, whilst the layout of the figures also



203 Pieter Brueghel the Younger *Crucifixion*
Paris, Church of Saint-Séverin



204 Pieter Brueghel the Younger *Crucifixion*
Antwerp, KMSKA



205 Unknown Flemish Master *Crucifixion*
's-Hertogenbosch, Noordbrabants Museum



206 Pieter Brueghel the Younger with landscape by Joos de Momper
the Younger *Crucifixion* Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum



207 Pieter Brueghel the Younger with landscape by Joos de Momper
the Younger *Crucifixion* Philadelphia Museum of Art



208 Pieter Brueghel the Elder *Landscape with a fortified town*
London, British Museum

corresponds with the other paintings of the *Crucifixion* by Pieter II.⁸⁰ In the drawing “Ominous clouds loom overhead. The majesty of nature and the sense of impending danger form a contrast to the sunny, pastoral landscape in the foreground” an incongruity “that painters such as Joachim Patinir and Herri met de Bles depicted Jerusalem in the background scenes of the Crucifixion.”⁸¹ The walled city, a fantasy, “seems to rustle in the wind of an impending storm”.⁸² This is probably as close as we will get to the original model for these paintings. The similarities and exact repetition of so many elements suggest that there was a model, the faithful nature of one version to another suggests there were preparatory cartoons that were used to transfer the image, with various adjustments being made at different times to the landscape background.



209 Jan Brueghel the Elder *Crucifixion*
Munich, Alte Pinakothek



210 Jan Brueghel the Elder *Crucifixion*
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Entr'acte **Barnett Newman** *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*

*"The cruel reality of the world is the cruel reality of the human heart,
 our own included"* Henri Nouwen

CRITICS MAKE very large claims about Barnett Newman. Having admitted that in 1960 he was "too dense at first to appreciate his importance",⁸³ forty years later David Sylvester decided that "in the pantheon of painters of the second half of the century it could be Johns who sitteth on the right hand of Newman the Father Almighty".⁸⁴ He goes on to say "If he does, the iconography is rather apt: Newman's art is immaculate and in charge; John's bears the scars of recurrent crucifixion". What is it about art criticism and religion?

God and religion are difficult issues to write about. God and religion and art only more so. Now that militant atheists preach a gospel of godlessness with the zeal of Christian missionaries in the age of faith, and Donald Kuspit has given up trying to understand how a work of art can be a spiritual experience, especially when that art is by Rothko or Newman, this is a challenge.⁸⁵

Someone said of American abstract painting that Barnett Newman closed the door, Rothko pulled down the blind and Ad Reinhardt turned off the light. It's clever and meaningless but it probably hinges on the minimalism and severity of Newman's art. Sylvester would write grandly of the "cosmic grandeur of Newman the cosmic energy of Pollock or the cosmic pathos of Rothko" while scoring points off those who had earlier ignored or been blind to Newman's brilliance, something that appeared late.⁸⁶ But his effusive despatches from the front line of the gallery world give little clue as to why he felt that looking at a lithograph of a solid black rectangle, even one minus the signature Newman 'zip', "the whole of art is there".⁸⁷

Shortly after he began to paint in his forties, Newman wrote "I believe that here in America, some of us, free from the weight of European culture... We are freeing ourselves of the impediments of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth, or what have you, that have been the devices of Western European painting. Instead of making 'cathedrals' out of Christ, man, or 'life', we are making it out of ourselves, out of our own feeling... The image we produce is the self-evident one of revelation".⁸⁸ Without having produced much, he wanted to change things. Richard Serra has spoken of the need to generate a series of experiences unfolding as you pass through and past his work. This idea I think came from his realisation that "When you reflect upon a Newman, you recall your experience, you don't recall the picture". And you do experience them, they are big. For Newman and his New York colleagues "the larger the canvas, the stronger the picture".⁸⁹

Newman was a theoretician as Annalee Newman pointed out in an interview in 1973, "the hostility to Barney's work began as soon as he started showing, because the guys never considered him a painter".⁹⁰ His road to painting was through writing. He called for 'a new abstraction' that answered man's spiritual needs. He wanted to pull abstraction back from the Pagan Void.⁹¹ And he wanted to reconcile modernism with metaphysics. Spare and universal, that imagery, huge expanses of colour, was recognised along with Rothko's by the end of the 1950s by Clement Greenberg as the next big thing, colour field painting. He wanted to be delivered from history.

The monumental painting cycle and personal meditation on mortality *The Stations of the Cross* painted between 1958 and 1966 is certainly an experience. You sit in that room in the National Gallery in Washington and experience their power. "Into the stations I commit my spirit", wrote a gushing blogger. Robert Motherwell talked about painting as "a voyaging into the night, one knows not where, on an unknown vessel". Newman's *Stations* is a journey we know not where. It is essential to understand the context in which they were painted, an American post-Holocaust Jewish context. Newman wanted to be delivered from history.

In a 1966 television interview he had talked about "the feeling I had at the time of the war in '41 that the world was coming to an end. And to the extent that the world was coming to end, the whole issue of painting, I felt, was over".⁹² The first two paintings in the series were completed in 1958. Three years later a further two were finished at which time Newman claims to have realised their meaning. He gave them the full title and set about completing the set.⁹³ He associated that moment with Christ's Passion.⁹⁴

Eichmann had been caught in 1960, tried and hanged in 1962. During his trial he told the court that at the conference held in the Wannsee Villa in Berlin, on 20 January 1942, to discuss *die Endlösung der Judenfrage*, "at that moment I sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt". Who was he to judge, "to have my thoughts in the matter?" Pilate famously ends his brief interview of Jesus with the words "What is truth?"⁹⁵ As Hannah Arendt reported for the *New Yorker* "Eichmann felt like Pontius Pilate and washed his hands in innocence".⁹⁶ The use of the Crucifixion as a metaphor for the Holocaust had already become established. The American forces had renamed the road into Dachau 'the Way of the Cross',⁹⁷ a Talmudic scholar had referred to "the Passion lived out by Judaism between 1940 and 1945",⁹⁸ and later "the Golgotha of modern mankind is Auschwitz. The Cross, the Roman gallows, was replaced by the gas chamber".⁹⁹ And Newman had been to Colmar in 1964 to see Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece.¹⁰⁰

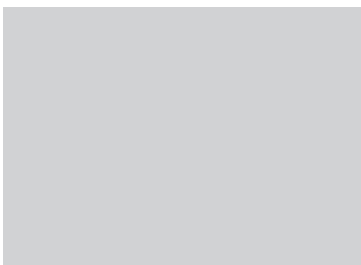
Lema Sabachthani – "why hast thou forsaken me?"¹⁰¹ The paintings are associated at that moment in Jewish history with the Passion of Christ. Originally displayed down the ramp at the Guggenheim, a Via Dolorosa where the spectators are kept up close and personal to the work. Having "enlarged our sense of the capacities of color"¹⁰² Newman's Stations have lost their colour, they are stark, still, empty, we are in a place of loss. "Don't think, but look!"¹⁰³

Like Pieter Bruegel, this is a pilgrimage in paint.¹⁰⁴

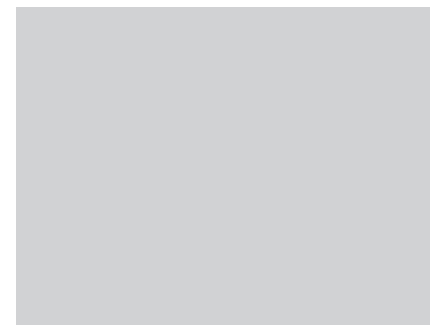
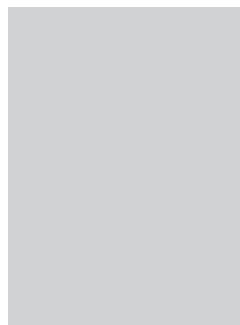
The urge to create memorials became an American ideal, many of Newman's contemporaries designed them. Whereas many of those that witnessed life and death in places like the Warsaw ghetto, never spoke of it; "I closed that box and turned the key".¹⁰⁵

211 Barnett Newman *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani* Washington, National Gallery. Photograph © Steve Rogers Photography

212 Barnett Newman
The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1966. Visible on the ramp are *Third Station* and *Fourth Station*, and, through the arched entrance of the high gallery *Tenth Station*, *Eleventh Station*, and *Twelfth Station*. Photograph © Robert Murray



213 Barnett Newman 1960
The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani Third Station oil on exposed canvas 198.1x152.4cm National Gallery of Art Washington, DC. Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection © 2014 The Barnett Newman Foundation/ADAGP, Paris



214 Viewing the *Twelfth Station* and *Thirteenth Station* at the Guggenheim Museum in 1966. Photograph © Robert Murray

Foreign Affairs – a Roman Holiday

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes” Proust

GOSSAERT ACCOMPANIED his patron, Philip of Burgundy, to Rome in 1508/9 where he recorded antique statuary and architectural monuments. Not only was Gossaert the first Netherlander to unite classical, archeologically correct style and detail with classical subject matter, he opened the way to an ever-increasing number of artists travelling south to Italy. The increased desire for access to classical texts and images became an important facet of northern European humanism. The art of the Italian Renaissance and Mannerism were explored for their formal and expressive possibilities. Netherlanders moved away from the late Gothic style as defined by Baldass, Friedländer’s ‘Antwerp Mannerism’. There was a trend towards Romanism. And when Raphael’s cartoons for the tapestry series *The Acts of the Apostles* came to Brussels where they were woven, Italy came to them.

Pieter Coecke van Aelst, Jan van Scorel, Maerten van Heemskerck, Lambert Lombard, Frans Floris, Hans Speckaert, Maerten de Vos, et al, – all went to Italy, Bernard van Orley may have gone; Lucas van Leyden, the most Italianate of them all, did not. As influential was the great variety of Italian work by way of the production of prints issuing forth from Hieronymus Cock’s firm *Aux Quatre Vents*, including Andrea del Sarto, Raphael, Bronzino, Luca Penni, Giorgio Vasari and Leonardo da Vinci. In addition to the response to classical antiquity, Italian experience manifested itself in depiction of the human figure, but even more was the representation of nature.

There is no doubt that since the Middle Ages, artists from the Low Countries were keen on travel. Guicciardini wrote of Netherlandish artists fanning out across Europe in his *Descrittione di tutti Paesi Bassi* in 1567. Karel van Mander went to Italy before commenting on how many had gone before him, and how mobile they were in comparison with their northern European colleagues. A study in 1985 demonstrated the cultural diaspora of the Netherlanders to be greater than anywhere else in Europe as a result of urbanisation, trading links, the sheer numbers of artists working there at the time and the competitive spirit that engendered.¹⁰⁶ The courts of Europe beckoned, Netherlandish influence spread, the influence was there throughout Bruegel’s lifetime, but did he go to Italy?

Meadow has pointed to a “crisis in which Netherlandish artists found themselves at the beginning of the century, when the new Italian art first found its way into the consciousness of artists and patrons, borne along some of the routes by which knowledge of classicizing humanism reached Europe north of the Alps. This art carried with it the prestigious associations granted to all remnants and revivals of classical culture by the humanists. Reactions to this crisis were varied, with some artists like Frans Floris wholeheartedly adopting the new style, others such as Pieter Aertsen attempting a hybrid of the two traditions and still others – and here we could place Pieter Bruegel – instead rejecting Italianate art and returning to the native fold.”¹⁰⁷ Meadow goes on to show to what extent Bruegel borrowed from and was derivative of ‘prior art’.

He lists most of the suggestions that are usually made about him: developing the landscapes of Patinir, the style of Bosch, “transforming and monumentalizing” the “seasonal labours in the calendar pages of illuminated manuscripts”, his engagement with other Netherlandish and German artists, and listing a potential range of putative sources. In other words, Meadow views Bruegel as someone who “orchestrates his relation to past artistic traditions” and in 16th century terms, was an imitator, one who at the very least, emulated others. He views *The Procession to Calvary* as a work that shares motifs, “compositional devices and anecdotal details” with possibly twenty other Netherlanders in what was becoming a new “painterly tradition”.

Exactly. In the words of Jane Austen “it is a truth universally acknowledged”.

Bruegel was a magpie of an artist, he ‘stole’ from everywhere, his pictures were derived from everything that was going on around him, everything he saw, to the extent that when there was nothing left to steal, he copied himself.¹⁰⁸ It does not read well when written like that but the point is that, like Picasso, he ‘stole’ with genius.¹⁰⁹ Great artists can do this because they do not simply appropriate; they twist and develop, reinvest and transform, whatever they pick on, until the original starting point, whatever it may be that they have borrowed, has all but disappeared. So yes, Bruegel stole, but he did wonderful things with his plunder.

At an earlier point in the same article referring to a poem by Lucas de Heere, Meadow, in common with most critics, points out “Bruegel had indeed ‘been to Rome’”. If we are to believe those others, Bruegel travelled the length and breadth of the country from Sicily to Siena, from Milan to Messina, with stops in Rome, Naples and just about everywhere else. As to the rest of this grand tour, *The Seasons* alone apparently contain visual references to the north of Italy, the south Tyrol, the Rhineland, the environs of Geneva, and a great deal besides. The great orchestrator of artistic traditions, the imitator, the borrower, the copyist of ideas, the plunderer of others’ source material, one who ‘quoted and reworked’ the ideas of others, he saw it all. And ‘all’ in this context must, at the very least, mean the work of Titian, Michelangelo, Giorgione, Bellini, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, to name but a few – possibly even Tintoretto, and Veronese. If Pieter Bruegel went to Italy, then he must have looked at the art.

But.

At this point we have to suspend belief in the magpie and believe that an artist like Bruegel saw it all but rejected it all, and if he did not reject it then we are supposed to accept that he certainly kept no notes or visual references for his later use. Or that he made reference to anything he had seen in his own work only after his grand tour. Is that credible?¹¹⁰

As with Jheronimus Bosch, when investigated, the supposed proof is tenuous. On the basis of what we know it is just as likely as not that Bosch went to Italy and Bruegel did not.¹¹¹

The drawings Gossaert made on his visit reveal exactly what he found. The half-ruined ancient monuments and buildings, newly-excavated classical statues, Roman bronzes, designs from stone coffins in the Forum, drawings he mined for figures and ornament for the rest of his working life. Because Philip of Burgundy as well as being an admiral and a diplomat was an exceptionally secular bishop, one whose palace was decorated with erotic art, his collective desires were fuelled by Gossaert with elaborate carnal imagery, in conspicuous displays of expressive sexuality that Ainsworth delicately refers to as ‘heightened eroticism’. Never mind the content, he recorded what he saw.

Did Bruegel really travel south? Did he go but stop at the Alps? Did he go at all?

The Cinquecento was the era of great artistic rivalry in Italy. Like Antwerp, Venice in particular was not only one of the largest and wealthiest cities in Europe, it was a hub of commerce and also of painting. The ambition, the cut-throat competition, the envy, the pressure, the patrons, their audiences, fame, and jealousy: it would have been difficult to keep up. Styles were calibrated and commissions sought in response to the work of others. Written sources describe how a certain work of art was executed “in competition with” another artist. That rivalry must have been fun, exciting, challenging. If it spurred on the Venetians, the Tuscans and the Romans, what would it have not done to a visitor from northern Europe? It must have been utterly compelling, even just the faintest whiff of that atmosphere would be intoxicating. The majority of the work had sacred themes, Christian belief permeated virtually every sphere of existence, miracles and faith were still a part of everyday life, their prosperity was to a large part seen as a result of their piety. Would a religious artist, and a ‘magpie’ at that, take nothing away from all this? Did all this really just pass Bruegel by? Did he learn nothing, take nothing, and copy nothing at all?

Then there are those drawings, the ones that supposedly show he crossed the Alps. (See *Drawing reveals the artist...* in the next chapter.) He certainly showed little interest in the Antique and Graeco-Roman mythology that so captivated his compatriots, and the claimed possible later references made to Antiquity or Italian aestheticism are hard to discern. The paintings of the *Bay of Naples* are the wrong shape. The shape of Bruegel's bay relates perhaps to the *Ten Books of Architecture* by Vitruvius where it is recommended that ports be rounded, or possibly more to its depiction by other artists who also painted a crescent shape. In other words, if he really did paint it, he copied it, he certainly had not been there and seen it. We know nothing about his route, it is all conjecture. Whether he travelled by sea to Italy or overland across France and Switzerland, we simply do not know.

*'The wish is father to the thought'*¹¹²

A Venetian national, Giorgio Glovicic, born in 1498 in Grizane (today in Croatia but part of Venice at the time), is better known by his assumed name Giulio Clovio, a manuscript miniaturist, whom Vasari called one of 'the marvels of Rome' and the 'Michelangelo of small works', lived in Rome from 1540.¹¹³ Having taken Holy Orders in Mantua, he became a protégé of Cardinal Grimani who released Clovio from his vows, and for whom he engraved medals and seals. He later worked on behalf of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and was responsible for the 28 miniatures in the *Farnese Hours* in 1546, now to be seen in the Morgan Library and Museum in New York. In later life, in 1570-71, he was painted by El Greco whom he subsequently recommended to Farnese.¹¹⁴ On the basis of an inventory of Clovio's possessions drawn up after he died in 1578, there were apparently four paintings by Pieter Bruegel in his estate. However, all four are lost. There were supposedly "*un quadro di Leon di Francia a guazzo di mano di Mro Pietro Brugole*" (a view of Lyon in gouache); "*un quadro di un albero a guazzo di Mro Pietro Brugole*" (a gouache of a tree); "*una torre di Babilonia fatta di avolio [avorio?] di mano di Mro Pietro Brugole*" (a Tower of Babel painted on ivory), and "*un quadretto di miniature la metà fatto per mano sua l'altra di Mro Pietro Brugole*" (a painted miniature, of which half was made by him [Clovio], and the other half by M[ae]str[o] Pieter Bruegel).¹¹⁵

Not only lost but Sellink tells us "...they represent techniques and supports that appear nowhere else in Bruegel's extant work, as no miniatures, gouaches or paintings on ivory have been preserved."¹¹⁶ Whilst Sellink goes on to point out that "many works have been lost, it also shows how careful we should be in drawing conclusions about the artist and his work on the basis of what has survived" goes on to point out that Clovio may well have purchased the works "or received them as a token of friendship". The legibility of the tiniest details on the two *Tower of Babel* paintings that survive lead Sellink to presume that after having "an initial training in the art of illumination with Mayken Verhulst, Bruegel further refined the technique in Italy under the guidance of Clovio."¹¹⁷ He 'may well have purchased the works' something not uncommon, but artists who work together and are friends are better known to exchange works than sell them to each other.

Works that are lost, in techniques unknown elsewhere, may well have been bought by an artist known to have been a collector. He certainly copied: "two conspicuous instances... from Northern art: a *Flight Into Egypt*... taken from Dürer's woodcut of the same subject... a *Tower of Babel* taken almost verbatim from the Grimani Breviary."¹¹⁸ Marijnissen even points out, grasps at might be a more honest description, a marginal inset of "storm-tossed ships" in a *Last Judgement* attributed to Clovio of which he asks "Could it be from Bruegel's hand?"¹¹⁹ Again we have a demonstration of the wish to belief 'being father to the thought' that Bruegel must have gone to Italy, otherwise how could Clovio own four pictures?

On balance, it can be stated that the case has not been made for the visit, that Pieter Bruegel did not in fact go to Italy in 1552-53/54, that supposed evidence that he did, can and

should be discounted, and that the case remains unproven. Locating Bruegel in Italy for a year or two after his apprenticeship with Pieter Coecke van Aelst, collaboration on an altarpiece commissioned by the glove-makers of Mechelen (probably with Pieter Baltens who was responsible for the main panel, Bruegel painted the outer wings in grisaille), and his enrolment in the guild of St Luke, remain problematic. Contemporaries in the guild did make the pilgrimage to Italy, Bruegel did not. Inventories of other artists and collectors prove nothing. The evidence of the drawings prove less and less as the years pass. The paintings have already been discounted by dendrochronology. Bruegel did not go to Italy. He is no less an artist for not having made the trip. It may help to fill a chronological gap in his life, one sorely lacking in hard fact. Myths abound, this is one of them.

His life is elusive, his biography problematic, his beliefs and opinions unknown, his background guesswork, the archives all but empty.¹²⁰ Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* of 1604 has been taken as gospel; "travelling to France and thence to Italy" he wrote and ever since everyone has skewed what little is known in order to prove it.¹²¹ And Van Mander's line he "swallowed all those mountains and rocks which, upon returning home, he spat out again onto canvases and panels" is so evocative it captures the imagination and has thus been repeated ad nauseam. It is speculation.

It is assumed that Van Mander based his text on information from, among others, Gillis van Coninxloo whose mother was the stepsister of Pieter Coecke van Aelst, the father of Bruegel's wife. Van Mander took a great deal of poetic licence. Lest we forget, it is also thanks to Van Mander that Bruegel was "perceived as an early modern chronicler of Flemish life" when he introduced the notion of *Boeren Bruegel*. His charming descriptions of the 'witty and humorous Pieter Bruegel' who 'frequently went out among the peasants whenever there was a feast or a wedding' are typical of the way he chose to model his lives of artists on their works, so Bruegel had to be a peasant. A peasant? This 'peasant' was educated, part of a well-connected circle, with sophisticated clients and a receptive middle-class audience. The strong didactic streak that runs through his paintings matches the intellectual nature of someone mainly concerned with theological matters. A peasant? Certainly not.

By highlighting the peasants in the work, Van Mander was misleading about the man, whilst he was misled by the drawings, and hence wrong about Italy. But it made a good story. Friedländer points out that Van Mander assumed Bruegel's visit to Italy was much earlier than has subsequently been thought likely, and points out that "two engravings of riverscapes with mythological trappings" signed Petrus Bruegel fec. Romae A 1553 were probably not engraved by the artist.¹²² This is comparable with the name Jheronimus Bosch appearing on prints that



215 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (?) *View of the Bay of Naples*
Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj



216 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Magpie on the Gallows* (detail)
Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum

the artist certainly did not design. The ‘authenticity’ is non-existent. Van Mander is unverifiable. It is about as reliable as tabloid journalism today on the lives of ‘celebrities’. It is fantasy. Inventing anecdotes about an artist’s life was standard practice at the time.

At the end of his article Meadow is nonplussed. “In the end we are left with a curious paradox. Bruegel rejects the model of classicising Italianate art to valorise instead a peculiarly northern, descriptive style. This was only possible, however, against the foil of Italianate art he abjured. And those voices from the past which have survived to help us understand how his contemporaries saw and understood his art, do so in the terms and metaphors of rhetorical *imitatio*, in a language which originally described and interpreted that art of ancient Rome which seems to have held so little interest for Pieter Bruegel.”¹²³ He went, he saw, he ignored? He never went there.

“Without Sicily, Italy leaves no clear and lasting impression; this place is the key to everything” Goethe¹²⁴ There are still, however, the Straits of Messina. *The Naval Battle in the Strait of Messina* an engraving and etching from 1561 by Frans Huys, printed from two plates *Aux Quatre Vents* credits Bruegel as the designer.¹²⁵ A drawing in brown ink that approximates to a view of Reggio Calabria in reverse to the print can and has been seen as a preparatory sketch for the publisher. It is very similar but it is not the same. The drawing is an interim production stage and has been overworked by another hand.¹²⁶ It has been suggested that the supplementary wash, and trees on the slopes, are closer to the Master of the Mountain Landscapes than the work of Bruegel.¹²⁷ They could, however, be viewed as similar to other drawings sometimes attributed to Bruegel.¹²⁸ The artist did not produce a drawing at Messina in reverse. One does not do that. It has been traced off and reversed from an earlier drawing that scholars wish to believe must have been originally by Pieter Bruegel. The rounded bay is suspiciously like that in *The Fall of Icarus* (see chapter 8) and with an active volcano, it could also be argued, features in the disputed *View of the Bay of Naples*.¹²⁹ The ships in the Huys print resemble a set of prints of sailing vessels, warships and coasters that he also made after designs by Bruegel, possibly with Cornelius Cort and others, for Hieronymus Cock, c1561-5. The original drawings for these have been lost. It is assumed the lost ship studies were used as the models for both the set of sailing ships and the battle off Messina.

Etna erupts on the right above the ‘seats of the giants’, and across the strait, where the monsters Scylla and Charybdis were reputed to lay in wait, lies Reggio di Calabria with fires raging after a Turkish attack. Alternatively, the reference to classical antiquity and mythology in the print’s inscription has been interpreted as a possible reference to the attacks on Sicily in 264-262BC by the Carthaginians.¹³⁰ Either way, it is the location that is of interest here. Is it the Straits of Messina, and was it drawn by Bruegel? One drawing, described as “a unique witness”, and “topographically accurate”, is at the same time acknowledged to be, at best, “a copy”.¹³¹ The drawing “came to light only recently... has not aged well, but it gives us an idea...” of how an original looked.¹³² It has been viewed as the model for a composite image of the battle to be seen in Braun and Hogenberg’s 1618 *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* where reference is made to an image “found among the studies of Pieter Bruegel... Drawn by his own hand. Communicated by Joris Hoefnagel. Anno 1617.”¹³³ Hoefnagel owned prints made from copies of Bruegel, this is possibly an original copy that he owned.¹³⁴ As to whether it is a copy of a drawing by Bruegel or by someone else, an original made *after* the print to gain credence as the original on which the print was based, or a copy of a copy, simply based on yet another Bruegel original or an artful plundering of his style to cash in on his visual language as a result of art market pressure, we can only surmise.

Sellink takes up Mielke’s view of the drawing that “he had not seen in original” as “a probable copy” and goes on to state his agreement “that this is a copy made around 1600” of a



217 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (?)
View of Reggio Calabria
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen



218 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (?) *View of the Ripa Grande Chatsworth House*



219 Frans Huys, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Naval Battle in the Strait of Messina* Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium



220 Anonymous, possibly after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *View of the Strait of Messina* Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium

drawing Bruegel “must have made *in situ*”.¹³⁵ Must have made? There is no ‘must’ about it. It only ‘must’ have been made by him if you accept as proven a number of possibilities, starting with the question of whether the artist ever visited Italy “given the astonishingly small number of contemporary documents and sources that we have regarding Bruegel’s life and work”.¹³⁶

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the article is Sellink’s comment that “there are inherent dangers in establishing a “logical” evolution in an artist’s style, technique and subject matter – certainly in the case of someone, like Pieter Bruegel, of whom we have so few sources, facts, and dates.” With regards the working process “At first sight... there is a general development from a rather loose, sketchy, and bold drawing technique into a more refined, detailed, and worked out manner of drawing landscapes... ” until “if one looks in detail... it becomes clear that this is not the case”. In reference to the ‘Venetian influence’ with the ‘Titianesque trees’ etc., with regards the ‘slightly dull’ *Italian Landscape* in Berlin “which was partially copied after Domenico Campagnola” he points to the differences in style and brushwork by way of introduction to the ‘troubling issues challenging current opinions’ where ‘art historians generally hope and expect to find... a logical and evolutionary manner’.

That, of course, is where art historians can go wrong. It is the lack of connection between drawings of the same period and the connection between drawings from different periods that have the potential to cause confusion and Sellink is correct in observing that “Bruegel used completely different techniques both simultaneously and over a longer period of time” and “used and reused earlier works”, meaning that serious questions arise. He picked up earlier sketches and reworked and integrated them into a design for a composition. More devastatingly he writes – “Bruegel did not execute the... *View of Reggio di Calabria* – drawn meticulously in reverse to the geographical situation – *in situ* around 1553” going on to say that “I am not – or, better to say, no longer – convinced that *Ripa Grande* was drawn *in situ* or even made in Italy”. If one of the foremost commentators on the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder has begun to doubt one of the drawings regularly put forward as proof of the artist’s visit to Italy (“the only surviving visual evidence of his visit to Rome” according to the Chatsworth website) then one may be right to air one’s own doubts. The case is at best unproven.



221 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Painter and the Connoisseur* Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina

The world according to Breugel – believing is seeing

“All things merge into one another – good into evil, generosity into justice, religion into politics, the year into the ages, the world into the universe...” Thomas Hardy¹³⁷

THAT FACE stares out at us sideways, and with some hesitation.¹³⁸ He looks into our eyes with apparently perfect sincerity, absolute conviction, and wrapped curiosity. Completely silent, the stories it could tell whisper across it, some inner monologue bubbling with both wit and defiance. Seeing may be believing but as Bruegel explores and refines the way we understand and approach his time, we get a sense of how it feels to sustain the search for truth in an infinitely and increasingly more complicated world. He is concerned with epistemology, investigating what distinguishes justified belief from opinion. He leaves it to us, his audience, to figure out where truth lies. His truth is there in the pictures; the question is, how do we find it, how do we even begin to pick our way in its direction? As we attempt to follow the signs, wandering, scrutinising, retuning, and continually recalibrating our understanding of Bruegel's world, if we are interested, we gradually come to appreciate that this is also a plea for attention, an invitation to communal experience, an expression of urgency, an exclamation of wonder, and one of our first, most important and most enduring requests of each other – look! Because if we really look, we will get Bruegel's message, that believing comes from seeing.

What drove Bruegel? If John Updike was right about Bruegel's belief that “God's eyes see what ours cannot” the artist may well have shrugged his shoulders in despair at what was happening around him, “God knows, because we cannot”. The punch line was that if He did know, then He was not saying much. The instinctive sympathy between art and the worship of God contrasted with the spiritual poverty of an increasingly violent culture around him. As life's meaning became meaningless in a Netherlands racked by division and oppression, Bruegel's direct line to God only ever received a busy signal. Just as Paul revised his views, Luther changed his and took Paul as a model, and Bruegel saw Paul as an example to set before Alva, so constant revision is a part of Christian life. If there is no revision there is no thought about faith, then it ceases to be faith, it becomes simply knowledge, and as Job knew, ‘God, who is sublime, cannot be an object of our knowledge’.¹³⁹

Revision, that second look at what we think we know for certain, is essential to the life of faith. An artist who tries to engage the critical and interpretative skills of his audience and couch his narrative in terms of Bible stories and visual metaphors implicitly understands not only the infinite complexity of the Godhead but that faith itself demands that his audience accept both infinite complexity and infinite simplicity at the same time, then the layers of meaning and visibility he put into his work would not feel unapproachable. There is no reason to accept the view that Bruegel intentionally made interpretation of some of his work difficult as others have argued in order to make the viewers' spiritual pilgrimage harder.¹⁴⁰ As with Erasmus's view of the Bible's language, so with Bruegel's imagery, both tell the story of important events in simple ways, responding to the needs of simple minds as well as the most intricate searches of more subtle intellects. They are adaptable. The inexhaustible richness of the biblical text is matched by the interpretations open to the audience that first saw Bruegel's paintings.

Whatever we may think Bruegel believed, he never lost his faith in God. Faithful revision opens up a space for continual thinking, not deciding, and yet still believing in God.¹⁴¹ In that way art can offer a sort of training for being faithful, insisting that the audience keeps thinking, even as we turn away and look over our shoulder for a second look. “There is in God, some say, / A deep, but dazzling darkness.”¹⁴² It is one of the most compelling narratives in Christian literature, the power of light and darkness in the conversion of St Paul. He is blinded by a

dazzling light, but it is in the three days of darkness that follow when his conversion happens. His conversion is presented to us as a mystical experience so overwhelming that it kept him in the dark. We can focus on the light that blinded and dazzled Paul but the meaning of his change of life is to be found in the darkness, the hidden time, after which his engagement with the issues of the day, his tireless debating, travelling and writing come from the core experience of the dark and not being able to see. His religious engagement with the social and political reality in which he was embedded was a mirror for Bruegel searching for a direction in the darkness of life around him in the Netherlands, and it may have given him the spiritual authority and energy to paint. Terry Eagleton has written that evil “has the ludicrous pomposity of a clown seeking to pass himself off as an emperor”, an insight that traces its origins back to a theological observation of Augustine that evil is not something obscenely glamorous but at its heart is something cold, empty and hollow, a form of nothingness.¹⁴³ “Artists and writers may write out of images and convictions that are mostly immune to the specifics of the political moment.”¹⁴⁴

The reality of death gives shape to our lives. Looked at from Brabant in the 16th century that must have seemed a futile statement but with St Paul an audience might see a way to “lighten our darkness”. The light of Christ, the darkness of evil, the light of knowledge, the darkness of ignorance, the light of faith, the darkness of doubt, light and dark, metaphors for the Christian tradition. “I saw eternity the other night / Like a great ring of pure and endless light.”¹⁴⁵ Forged in the crucible years of religious conflict, Bruegel was not immune to the specifics of the political moment. Nobody was, no matter how well connected.

We put our longings into what we look at. For some reason we need to look at art, and what we see becomes part of our lives. With so much to look at in Bruegel we may become lost in looking. George Santayana commented “everything in nature is lyrical in its essence; tragic in its fate, and comic in its existence”.¹⁴⁶ Pieter Bruegel delivered all three. In his evocation of the lyrical, the comic and the terrifying, this artist enlarges our imagination of the range and possibilities of God. And at times reminds us that the best defence against the dark arts of evil is the deflating power of laughter.

At the end of chapter four we left Bosch presenting us with an image of the past and the future colliding. With Bruegel, their seemingly opposite lives were dedicated to the same cause: fighting against the future. They saw the evil of their own time not as a throwback but as a preface; to what, they did not know. These paintings are time capsules, histories that compress information about more than a single moment when the artist captured them. They range across centuries so we may try to understand their worlds.

The strength of the art, the art of the matter, is in its allying observation and imagination.

In the end, Bruegel chose to stand by his religion, his country, and his rulers. In the process of deciding on that course he had to wrestle with many different questions, not just those of belief, patriotism, and politics. What would his choice of allegiance mean for his family, his friendships and his career? Whichever side prevailed his homeland was clearly about to change forever. A whole set of personal convictions, fears, character, and religious belief would be brought to bear on the events that would change the course of history, shake up old assumptions, and change expectations of what was to come as well as a sense of what had gone before.

For a brief moment after the half millennium had been successfully negotiated, anything must have seemed possible. Amidst the ruins of the old world they had grown up in, people saw the opportunity for change. Bruegel would live to see the opening scenes of a great and terrible national drama when almost everything hung in the balance. He would foreshadow things to come but never fully embrace the revolutionary ideas of some of his friends. As repression increased it quickly became clear that all the Netherlands could expect was more of the same. They had seen enough to expect nothing else.

- 1 Browning wrote *Andrea del Sarto* from which the quotation is taken, about a man characterised as 'the faultless painter' a description that has been used of Bruegel. Del Sarto died of the plague aged 44 (arguably the same age as Bruegel) in 1530 leaving his wife to doubtless continue a merry life with his former assistants – as she was reported to have done when he was still alive. It was a good life; she outlived him by 40 years.
- 2 Utopia as an imprecise way to characterise an ideal that is out of reach is illegitimate, because by its very etymology it means without-place, whereas Plato's *Republic*, commonly described as the first philosophical utopia, absolutely does not correspond to this definition; it is that which *par excellence* has a place in the intelligible world. As with Aristotle's heavenly bodies, fixed to the celestial vault, Thomas More's island of Utopia is elsewhere, somewhere unlocated.
- 3 An alternative was credited to the 5th century Prosper of Aquitaine: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, let the law of prayer determine the norm of faith.
- 4 Jonathan Jones 'The end of innocents' *Guardian* 17 January 2004
- 5 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Massacre of the Innocents* 109.2x158.1cm oil on panel, The Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace. The painting in the Royal Collection in Britain was generally believed to be a copy of the original in Vienna until it was discovered that the wood from which the Vienna panel was cut could not have been felled until the year of Bruegel's death. Hence the Vienna panel is considered one of at least 14 copies produced by Pieter Bruegel the Younger and the reworked panel in London, now devoid of any dramatic emotional urgency, is in fact the true original. *The Massacre of the Innocents* Pieter Bruegel the Younger or Workshop after Pieter Bruegel the Elder 116x160cm oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
- 6 Matthew 2:16-18
- 7 A soldier in a red coat shouts at the windows of an inn where the sign says 'Dit is inde ster' (this is the star) and bore the Star of Bethlehem before it was altered. At the time there was a house in Kipdorp, Antwerp called De Sterre van Bethlehem.
- 8 In *Hunters in the Snow*, the glaciers have reached the villages around Antwerp. Bruegel is accurate. The climate was changing dramatically and dangerously. The world was getting colder. Temperatures dropped globally in the Renaissance, so severely that climatologists call the era from 1400 to 1850 the Little Ice Age. The winter of 1565 was one of the first when everyone could see something had changed.
- 9 Brian Fagan *The Little Ice Age* 2000 p.xv
- 10 The words are from Anthony Blunt *Nicolas Poussin* 1967, writing about his favourite subject who, in the last years of his life (1660-64), painted the seasons for Cardinal Richelieu's cousin as strict, carefully composed compositions that border on the austere, a disciplined vision of Arcadia as pastoral historical myth, sylvan settings of bucolic charm in dappled light that combine pagan imagery of classical antiquity with themes of death and resurrection from Christianity.
- 11 *The Massacre of the Innocents*; 1563 *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* oil on panel 35x55cm Sammlung Oskar Reinhart 'am Römerholz', Winterthur; 1566 *The Census at Bethlehem* 115.3x164.5cm oil on panel Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, 1563 *The Flight into Egypt* oil on panel 37.1x55.6cm Courtauld Gallery, London.
- 12 Dominique Allart 'Did Peter Bruegel the Younger See his Father's Paintings? Some methodological and critical reflections' *Bruegel Enterprises* Maastricht/Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique exhibition catalogue 2001-2, p52
- 13 *The Flight into Egypt* – Matthew 2:13-15/the Apocryphal Gospel of pseudo-Matthew; *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* – Matthew 2:1-11; *The Census at Bethlehem* – Luke 2:1-5; *The Massacre of the Innocents* – Matthew 2:13-18.
- 14 *The Adoration of the Magi* oil on panel 111x83.5cm National Gallery, London
- 15 *The Adoration of the Magi* watercolour on canvas 124x169cm Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. The many copies and versions of this picture by Pieter Bruegel the Younger suggests it may be by him. He copied all three of his father's *Adorations*. The most marketable was the one now in Winterthur, of which Ertz catalogued 26 versions by the son. The quality of the snowflakes on the Winterthur picture, spontaneous random dabs of white paint, set it apart. Pieter Bruegel the Younger did not even attempt them, but an anonymous copy from the Louis Dimier collection, sold at Sotheby's 14 December 2000, lot 7, does appear to be particularly faithful. It has some falling snow.
- 16 Jan Noiret's inventory of 1572 lists five framed Bruegels, four of which were on cloth, Van Mander refers to three in his biography of Bruegel, and Giulio Clovio's inventory in Rome lists 'a guazzo' work by Bruegel given to him as a gift. (Guazzo – the Italian for this Netherlandish technique.) Faster and cheaper to produce, the watercolours sold for a third of the price of oil paintings. Bruegel was the last major artist to have trained in all three late medieval Netherlandish techniques of watercolour on cloth, miniature painting, and oil on panel. Odilia Bonebakker has pointed out that the artist was "much more immersed in [watercolour] than we have previously recognized". *Textile Transgressions: Bruegel and the Media HNA* conference 2010. A common technique in Flanders in the 15th and 16th centuries, despite the fact that very few examples have survived due to the fragility of the process with the paint not adhering well to the support. The four Bruegel's are *The Misanthrope* and *The Parable of the Blind* (both 1568), *The Adoration of the Magi* (c1555-7), and *The Wine of St Martin's Day* (c1565-8).
- 17 Bruegel's mother-in-law, Mayken Verhulst, the second wife of Pieter Coecke van Aelst, identified by Guicciardini as a consummate artist (and miniaturist) in her own right, who used tempera, and whilst no works survive that are positively attributed to her, she is sometimes credited with being responsible for the works of others such as the Master of the Brunswick Monogram. Why not this image so often queried as to its attribution to Pieter Bruegel the Elder? Lodovico Guicciardini *Descrittione di tutti I Paesi Bassi* 1567 p100.
- 18 Ice eventually started to roll back from the world – but not from art. After Hendrik Avercamp's winter wonderlands where entire towns are shown out on the ice, Abraham Hondius painted skaters gliding across a frozen River Thames, Rowlandson painted frost fairs, Caspar David Friedrich the menace of snowbound Alps, JMW Turner snow storms and blizzards, right up to Peter Doig's images of winter sports.
- 19 Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier *The Promised Lands: the Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530* see p238 for a note on taxes in the first half of the 16th century.
- 20 The signature and date: BRVEGEL 1566 are typical of his style after 1559, but they have been heavily retouched. Currie and Allart 2012 p100 endorse its topicality: "this enduring image conceals religious, political and philosophical undertones that would have been appreciated by Bruegel's contemporaries."
- 21 Dated between 1604 and 1610, there are 13 copies of *The Census* attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Younger. Eight of them were brought together for the *Bruegel Enterprises* exhibition (Maastricht-Brussels 2001-2). The underdrawings were made by different hands, the painting style throughout is often inconsistent as more than one hand worked on each picture, the paint quality varies a great deal, the version now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lons-le-Saunier "betrays a stronger artistic personality than many of the other copies and is perhaps the furthest from Bruegel the Younger's workshop manner" (Currie and Allart 2012 p419) but all 13 are missing key elements of the original, other elements have been transformed, and some completely misinterpreted (eg a hole in the ice has become a mound of snow, a tree has become a pole, a heap of dung a wall, the Virgin's basket is no longer brown or of wicker) suggesting that they were made after a preliminary compositional study rather than the original. Currie and Allart 2012 pp424-7, a study, the authors suggest, that was incomplete because the artist either knew what he was going to do later or changed his mind.

- 22 The Vienna painting was firmly discounted following dendrochronological dating (K Demus, F Klauner and K Schütz *Flämische Malerei von Jan van Eyck bis Pieter Bruegel d.Ä.* 1981 pp118-122)
- 23 The remains of the signature were found during conservation treatment by Amelia Jackson in 2007.
- 24 See the 1997 catalogue *Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere-Jan Brueghel der Ältere: Flämische Malerei um 1600, Tradition und Fortschritt* Klaus Ertz and Christa Nitzte-Ertz et al, pp322-6 numbers 98-9 from David Kunzle 'Spanish Herod, Dutch Innocents: Bruegel's Massacres of the Innocents in their sixteenth-century political contexts' *Art History* 2001, 24-1 pp51-82. One of the finest is in the Brukenthal Collection, originally displayed in Vienna at the behest of the Empress Maria Theresa, and later permanently in Hermannstadt (now Sibiu), the capital of Transylvania that is today a part of Romania. The Sibiu version was attributed to Pieter Brueghel the Younger on technical and stylistic grounds in 2012. (D Allart, C Currie, S Saverwyns 'Une copie qui fait honneur à son modèle: le Massacre des innocents de Pieter Brueghel le Jeune' *Bulletin de l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique*.) For an appreciation of Kunzle see Jeremy Bangs 'Pieter Bruegel and History' *The Art Bulletin* vol60/4 1978 pp704-5 that concludes with the observation that the "calamity" of an "unprecedented number" of deaths in 1559-60 of so-called "victims of high rank" may be considered in relation to *The Triumph of Death*.
- 25 David Kunzle overstates his case to make a point, and in so doing has attracted considerable criticism. *From Criminal to Courtier: the soldier in Netherlandish art 1550-1672* draws parallels between the imperialism of Spain in the 16th century and the United States in the 20th. He calls US war-mongering "pure political Viagra" and claims to feel as if he has lived under a succession of King Herods as "the policy of the US government since World War II has been to support the most murderous of repressive regimes, the Alvas of the Third World, with a 'counterinsurgency doctrine... modelled on the practices of World War II fascism'." He writes of hawks and doves across "that great DMZ of all Dutch art history". He complains of "methodological fashions... to strip art of its political meaning... Although the 'social history of art' has made great strides during the last generation, there is still a peculiar resistance to seeing art as mirror and tool of political consciousness" – a claim he backs up by stating that his work has been rejected by journals in the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. He sees the 1970 My Lai massacre poster 'Q. And Babies? A. And babies' "at the latter end of a tradition started by the Dutch in the 16th-17th century". For him they are both protest art. He likes to quote Shakespeare, noting that the playwright "and his contemporaries learned all about contemporary warfare from veterans of the Dutch wars, so that what they call us, to a degree, how the Dutch themselves felt". For Kunzle, war was an aspect of 'renaissance man' that we tend to forget today. "War was the permanent condition of fallen man. Peace was to be found only in heaven; on earth, life was continual conflict. The 'church militant' was a fighting unit. To argue otherwise, that permanent peace on earth was both possible and attainable, and that all war was wrong, was sheer cowardice, and even, as Erasmus complained, punishable as heresy". He quotes a current US Marine Corps motto that uses a phrase of Simon de Montfort, "Kill them all, and let God sort them out". Grim illustrations of human suffering led to the "Black Legend" of Spanish cruelty, yet in line with their unparalleled pictorial reportage of common life artists concentrated on anything but heroic, monumental imagery of military glory. He sees paintings such as *The Massacre of the Innocents* as "a popular response to war". This did not change until Rubens "the princely painter of the Spanish Netherlands, [chose] to monumentalize war and warrior". He points out the difference with German art which, quoting Hale 1990, "heeded the summons of the drum and followed the flag". Commenting on new forms of terror and patriotism he remarks "Calvinist regimes forbade the public pictorialization of Christ's passion. The military sadism that had afflicted Christ was acted out, instead, in Netherlandish fields and farms".
- 26 Kunzle also draws attention to *The Attack* oil on panel 96x128cm (also known as *Peasants' Distress and Peasant Couple Attacked by Robbers*) an image only known through copies, that shows some thugs beating a peasant woman on the edge of a wood, with a gibbet in the distance. It does not look very much like a Bruegel, however, if it is, it fits the argument, unless we accept that Sten Karling was

right when he attributed the version in Stockholm University to Pieter Bruegel the Elder after the painting had been cleaned in 1976 to reveal a signature and a date of 1567. See Karling *Kunsthistorisk Tidskrift* 1976 vol 45 pp1-17. See also Larry Silver *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* 2011 pp380-4 "the strongest of several paintings that are still doubted at times as originals. However, this picture does at least raise the question of workshop participation, in part because its inconsistent execution, in part because some of the figures in the image repeat gestures and postures from previous works... [the landscape] echoes the authentic landscape in *The Misanthrope*."



Sometimes attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Attack* Stockholm University

- 27 Blockmans and Prevenier *The Promised Lands: the Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530* p239
- 28 Motley *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* I pp114 and 505, and III p592. A considerably lower figure of 2-3,000 is given by some historians. Even if we take a figure somewhere between the two extremes the number is alarmingly high in a population of 350,000 between 1521 and 1565 for Flanders. Alva boasted of 18,000 executed. His biographer William Maltby says 8,957, to which must be added those forced into exile; 30,000 to England alone by 1565; 60,000 in all under Alva's rule; 150,000 in total for the years 1572-1622.
- 29 With reference to Edgerton 1985 p148, Kunzle comments, see pp 25-26
- 30 P Colacicchi *All the Paintings of Pieter Bruegel* 1961, p17-18
- 31 Henri Hymans *Gazette des Beaux Arts* I 1891 p31. In 1604 Van Mander called it a 'massacre'. By 1621 an inventory had changed this to a 'village plundering'.
- 32 Stanley Ferber 'Peter Bruegel and the Duke of Alba' *Renaissance News* 1966 vol19-3 pp205-219
- 33 Max Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p28
- 34 Albert Deblaere 'Bruegel and the Religious Problems of his Time' *Apollo* 181 March 1977 pp176-180. He "may be prepared to allow to Bruegel the deepest insight into character, but not the prediction of events which no one could foresee". Surprisingly perhaps, Deblaere (1916-94) was Professor of Spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.
- 35 *ibid* p28
- 36 Gospel According to St Luke 3:13-14 "Do nothing more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers also asked him, saying: And what shall we do? And he said to them: Do violence to no man; neither calumniate any man; and be content with your pay." *The Preaching*, also known as *The Sermon of St John the Baptist* 1566, another "radical interpretation" Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p233 and a painting that was seemingly in continuous production by Pieter the Younger and Jan the Elder at the height of the Counter-Reformation. See K Ertz et al *Pieter Breughel de Jonge, Jan Brueghel de Oude* 1998 pp46-50.

- 37 *The Sermon of St John the Baptist* also known as *The Preaching* oil on panel 95x160.5cm Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest. Signed ·BRVEGEL· ·/·M·D·LXVI this is possibly one of several versions. The provenance of the work has long been in question since the inventory of Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, Governor of the Netherlands, refers to a painting of the subject but to a different size. Size matters (shades of the Bosch *Last Judgement* in Vienna). Is it possible the dimensions in the Coudenberg inventory included the frame? Supposing the dimensions were in the "Brussels foot" rather than the 'Austrian foot'? By how much has the painting in Budapest been trimmed down? Why would an unusually elongated horizontal format picture be made up of vertical panels? Could it be one of the copies by the artist's sons? The painting technique is reminiscent of the *Census at Bethlehem*. Small details are familiar: integrating seamlessly into the scene is a streak in the sky indicating divine intervention at the baptism at the water's edge (Matthew 3:16) cf the shaft of light in the *Conversion of Saul*; a handprint on a cloak (Adolf Monballieu 1979) is similar to the same motif in the *Procession to Calvary* and the *Wine of St Martin's Day* indicating clothing of the workhouse poor to prevent resale. Pieter Stevens annotated his copy of Van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck* that he had seen it but he did not say where (Briels 1980 pp206-7). In 1956 Michael Auner claimed it was in Hungary by 1569-70. Both Bruegel's sons copied this picture very faithfully apart from two key differences, the colour of the cloak of the figure centre-foreground and the dimensions). Susan Urbach 'Marginal remarks to Bruegel's Sermon of St John the Baptist in Budapest' *Flemish Art in Hungary, Budapest, 12-13 May 2000* C Van de Velde (ed) 2004 pp79-90
- 38 See Kunzle *From Criminal to Courtier: the soldier in Netherlandish art 1550-1672* 2002 p47 and n31 re Calvin pp186-8 and 195-6. Kunzle also quotes Erasmus *Paraphrase of the New Testament* 1521, in which he sees the Pharisees and Sadducees in terms of officials in his own day, "arrogant, fierce and conceited" taxing and extorting the people.
- 39 Raymond Chandler *The Simple Art of Murder* (printed with *Pearls are a Nuisance*) p183
- 40 Challenging times call for courageous people. In the words of Oscar Romero's last sermon delivered the day before he was assassinated in March 1980, "Today we are passing to our liberation through a desert strewn with bodies and where anguish and pain are devastating us." A champion of his faith and of the faithful, the Archbishop had previously discovered "the word of God is like the light of the sun. It illuminates beautiful things, but also things which we would rather not see." That was Bruegel too.
- 41 John Henry Newman *Parochial and Plain Sermons* 1878, vol 8, pp217-29
- 42 John Calvin *Institutes* Book 3, chapter 2, section 17. Again, a "full definition of faith" was set in "a firm and sure knowledge" whilst "if in the believer's mind certainty is mingled with doubt" he considered that "distracted by various thoughts, it does not follow that we are immediately divested of faith". See sections 7 and 18 respectively of chapter 2. He talked of "a firm and steadfast assurance", "mingled with doubt", which "has no wavering opinion" but "is a perpetual struggle with our own distrust", "affected by doubt". Thus this "firm and steadfast assurance" is not a placid, quiet, uninterrupted faith but something that is often "obscure and confused" in its understanding of divine will. This gives some clue perhaps as to why the *Institutes* are long. Why is Calvin so uncertain? He lacks infallible evidence.
- 43 Frequently attributed to the French philosopher Ernest Renan following his discourse at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" this sentence was first penned a generation later by the Czech social and political scientist Karl Wolfgang Deutsch. Renan did speak of the importance for a country's citizens to have things in common, and their need 'to have forgotten many things'. He also called a nation "a daily referendum". See *Renan Discours et conférences* 1887.
- 44 David Hare *Via Dolorosa* 1999
- 45 The Israeli writer David Grossman quoted by David Hare
- 46 Gospel According to Luke 6:31, usually rendered as – 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'; a line that has become the ethical code of the golden rule, the basis of the concept of human rights.
- 47 For a provocative view on political manipulation of the Holocaust as a means of moral blackmail to silence criticism of Israeli policies see Ilan Pappé *The Idea of Israel* 2014. It is instructive to read alongside *Israel Hayon*, the country's biggest-selling newspaper that has called for Gaza to be 'returned to the Stone Age'. During the 2012 Israeli bombing campaign a government minister called for Gaza to be consigned 'to the Middle Ages'. The culture of hatred only grows; Gaza reverts to routine misery.
- 48 Cherie Blair's observation in response to a question, 9 July 2002.
- 49 'The man who does not stop at red lights' was Yigal Sarna's definition of Sharon in *Yediot Ahronot*, quoted on the Lebanon Wire 18 December 2002. President Obama said he was quoting Sharon when he said 'If we insist...' in March 2013.
- 50 Ari Shavit *My Promised Land. The Triumph and the Tragedy of Israel* 2013 a series of quotes taken from the introduction and ch16 'Existential Challenge'. Shavit is on the editorial board of the liberal Zionist newspaper Ha'aretz and an influential columnist. He says in the introduction: "This book is the personal odyssey of one Israeli who is bewildered by the historic drama engulfing his homeland". As a visitor, it is sometimes, sadly, very hard not to be just as bewildered.
- 51 The 19th century slogan 'A land without people for a people without land' used to promote Jewish migration to Palestine has always been problematic. See Diana Muir *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2008 pp55-62
- 52 *Procession to Calvary* or *Christ Carrying the Cross* oil on panel 124x170cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 53 Guillaume de Déguileville *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* where Christ is described as the heavenly grain sown on earth by Charity, an idea used by the Brunswick Monogrammist and others whose *Calvary* is dominated by a windmill.
- 54 Bosch, most pointedly in the *Seven Deadly Sins* tabletop, both moralises and seeks to provoke an examination of conscience in the viewer. See chapter 1.
- 55 The Servite Order, one of the five original mendicant orders, founded in 1233 by seven holy Florentine men, originated the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows, based on the sorrows of Mary. A rosary manual was produced in 1484, the *Exempelboek II* carrying instructions for "those that cannot read [to] look at the illustrations while repeating the Ave Maria and think about the Life and Passion of Our Lord" to take advantage of the popularity of this devotion in the Netherlands from the late 15th century onwards. See Anne Winston-Allen *Stories of the Rose. The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* 1942 p34
- 56 In the case of Bruegel, and with reference to his assumed visit to Italy discussed later in this chapter, it should be noted that the artist's 'Northern Mannerism' was in no way Italianate.
- 57 Mark A Meadow 'Bruegel's Procession to Calvary, Æmulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style' *NKJ* 1996 pp182-6
- 58 Wolfgang Stechow considers "Bruegel's work is of vastly greater artistic and spiritual significance" than the others. *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* 1969 p88
- 59 *ibid* p90
- 60 Reindert L Falkenburg 'Pieter Bruegel's 'Kruisdraging': een proeve van 'close-reading' *Oud Holland* 1993, pp17-33
- 61 The third station of the cross: 'Jesus Falls the First Time Under His Cross'. In the painting, Simon has been singled out by the soldiers and press-ganged into carrying the cross for the exhausted Christ. 'The Cross is Laid Upon Simon of Cyrene' is the fifth station of the cross. The intervening station, the fourth, 'Jesus is Met by His Blessed Mother', looks unlikely to take place in Bruegel's version

of events. Jesus falls again at the seventh and ninth stations. Simon of Cyrene met God in the midst of pain and humiliation and degradation on that dusty road to Golgotha. Did Simon know who Jesus was; did he understand any of the significance of what he was being forced to do? Christ falls and Simon is forced to take up the Cross. Why did Bruegel choose to conflate the two stations? Is it simply a pictorial device, an element of composition, or is there more to Bruegel's choice? Of the greatest honour given to human beings, after Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus, next in line must be the man who carried His Cross. A Cross is something we may pick up involuntarily, but if Christians are true then they are obedient, prepared to pick up the burden Jesus hands them. Simon's job was not very spectacular, he did not carry the Cross far, but he did something Jesus was unable to do. The message surely is that whereas people always want the glory, the high profile job that gets them noticed, it is very difficult to get people to assume small responsibilities for which hard work, no payment and little glory is attached. But those smaller jobs are just as important as any other. Simon's job was small yet essential. He gave Jesus a short respite and thus the strength to carry on. Imagine the crowd having a go at him when he picked up the Cross, even though he was forced to do it by the soldiers. He was not Jewish. That was important, as carrying the Cross would not make him ceremonially unclean for the forthcoming Passover. It was a politically clever choice by a colonial force ready to do whatever it could to placate its subjects and prevent a revolt. He was a foreigner, an alien from Cyrenaica in present-day Libya, possibly black, a vulnerable person who it was easy for the Romans to carelessly exploit. It is a story to make us consider the consequences of our action when we may have colluded with others to force the vulnerable to suffer. It may be Bruegel's way to make us consider those occasions when we are the ones forced to carry the Cross; 'we all have our cross to bear'. The question is asked, how do we respond to the Cross? Is it a cause of resentment and malice or a means of grace? Forced into watching someone suffer is sometimes a burden we cannot escape. But do we choose to watch from a distance and not become involved or do we step into the road, take up the Cross and follow? In 1564 we believe Bruegel was asking the question of himself. He also poses the question of us.

- 62 John Updike 'The Thing Itself' *Due Considerations* 2007 p596, originally published in *The New York Review of Books*.
- 63 It really was mundane for Aldous Huxley *The Elder Peter Bruegel* 1938 pp20-21 "Those who have already taken their stand around the crosses are prudent ones; in these days we should see them with camp-stools and thermos flasks, six hours ahead of time, in the vanguard of the queue at Covent Garden."
- 64 Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones *Pieter Bruegel* p38 quotes the poet and critic Émile Verhaeren 'La Vie Flamande' *Journal de l'Université des Annales* December 1913 pp50-60 "The main action is swamped by a thousand others; it is not unity but multiplicity that characterizes Bruegel's art. He strikes not one blow but a hundred – first to seize our attention and then to jolt our sensibility". But of course, in that very multiplicity, there is remarkable unity.
- 65 RH Marijnissen, M Seidel *Bruegel* 1984 p29
- 66 See Joseph F Gregory 'Towards the Contextualization of Pieter Bruegel's 'Procession to Calvary'. Constructing the Beholder From Within the Eyckian Tradition' *NKJ* 1996 p209
- 67 Jürgen Müller *Das Paradox als Bildform, Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegels d.Ä* 1999 p140
- 68 Thomas Fusenig *15th-16th Century Studies* November 2001 *HNA* book review of Jürgen Müller
- 69 Georges Hulin de Loo attributed the invention to *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* in 1907. *René van Bastelaer, Georges Hulin de Loo Peter Bruegel l'Ancien, son Oeuvre et son Temps. Etude Historiques Suivie des Catalogues Raisonnés* 1907 pp361-2. Van Mander referred to two versions in the collection of Rudolph II.
- 70 Three examples – all Pieter Bruegel the Younger *Crucifixion* panel unsigned 90x130cm Church of St-Séverin, previously in the Parisian stronghold of the traditionalist Society of St Pius X, St-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet; *Crucifixion* panel signed and dated ·P·BRVEGHEL·1615, 98.9x148.1cm Coppée-le-Hodey collection; *Crucifixion* unsigned panel 102.3x149.4cm KMSKA, Antwerp
- 71 Pieter Bruegel the Younger with landscape by Joos de Momper the Younger *Crucifixion* panel signed and dated ·P·BREVGH·1617, 81.5x123.4cm Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest; Pieter Bruegel the Younger with landscape by Joos de Momper the Younger *Crucifixion* panel 66x121cm Philadelphia Museum of Art. The signature is indicative of Pieter II changing his name in 1616 from Bruegel to Breughel.
- 72 Jan Bruegel the Elder *Crucifixion* unsigned copper panel 26x35cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; Jan Bruegel the Elder *Crucifixion* signed and dated 1598 copper panel 36.2x55.4cm Alte Pinakothek, Munich
- 73 Klaus Ertz, Christa Nitze-Ertz *Breughel-Bruegel: Pieter Breughel le Jeune (1564-1637/8) – Jan Bruegel l'Ancien (1568-1625) une famille des peintres flamands vers 1600* 1998 exhibition catalogue, Koninklijk Museum voor schone Kunsten, Antwerp (also Essen and Vienna) pp63-69, nos 13-15
- 74 Evidence of a lost original indicate that the master probably painted the subject more than once: the inventory of Archduke Ernst's collection 17 July 1595; Peeter Stevens again annotated his copy of Van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck* claiming to have seen it in Brussels (Briels 1980 pp206-7); Hendrik Bartels' 1672 inventory refers to it. Peter van den Brink Brueghel Enterprises for various documents relating to the Leiden collection of Bartholomeus Ferreris, the collection of Archduke Ernst, the collection of Pieter II's daughter Maria that included a *Crucifixion* by Bruegel bequeathed to her by the widow of Jacob Cabeels. Other ideas as to lost originals are proposed by Gibson 1989 p69, Ertz 1998-2000 p433, and see also *Panorama op de wereld. Het landschap van Bosch tot Rubens* Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch exhibition catalogue 2001 pp115-117
- 75 Jan Bruegel the Elder *Crucifixion* signed and dated 1598 copper panel 36.2x55.4cm Alte Pinakothek, Munich
- 76 Glück 1932 pp79-80, Marlier-Folie 1969 p289, Ertz 1998-2000 p433, Essen, Vienna, Antwerp catalogue 1997 no11
- 77 Unknown Flemish Master *Crucifixion* panel 116x160 Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, where in 2001 it was attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Younger, a fact maintained by its accompanying caption today, along with a suggested dating of 1600-1610. Following dendrochronology Peter Klein has proposed 1598 as the earliest possible date for the panel's painting, and Pascale Fraiture 1590. See Currie and Allart p645 n47.
- 78 Gibson 1989 p69 states that the landscape has similarities with drawings of Mathys Cock. Ertz considers the view of Jerusalem similar to one by Herman Beertsz van Borculo. 1998-2000 p434
- 79 Gospel According to St Matthew 27:45 "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour."
- 80 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Landscape with Fortified City* pen and brown ink 23.6x33.3cm signed p-brueghel 1·5·5·3. The connection to the possible *Crucifixion* is made by Currie and Allart 2012 p641 who suggest that the painting in Paris is most like the lost original.
- 81 Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p50
- 82 *Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Drawings and Prints* Nadine M Orenstein (ed) 2001 p99
- 83 David Sylvester 'Curriculum Vitae' *About Modern Art* p26
- 84 David Sylvester writing in 1997 'Postscript – Johns II' *About Modern Art* p472
- 85 Donald Kuspit *Reconsidering the Spiritual in Art* lectures given at the School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2003, hung on the Kandinsky quote of 1912 "Über das Geistige in der Kunst" – On

- the Spiritual in Art, where the artist envisaged totally non-objective art, while stressing the dangers in creating total abstraction. Kuspit goes on to explain how Richter is 'spiritless', Kiefer "spiritual", etc. Kuspit bangs on about materialism and art today, views I might have considered seriously until one day I found a huge volume he had written on Cristóbal Gabarrón. Cristóbal Gabarrón! Go figure. (Some artists benefit from having a lot of their work brought together, and some do not. Gabarrón is among the latter. Grace Glueck put it nicely in the *New York Times* of 23 December 2005 "... the crude cubistic plays on the human figure here don't add a cubit to the canon... need we be exposed to so much of it?")
- 86 David Sylvester *About Modern Art* p309
 - 87 David Sylvester 'Barnett Newman: Untitled 1961' *Artforum* November 1994
 - 88 Barnett Newman 'The Sublime is Now' *Tiger's Eye* 6, New York, December 1948, quoted by David Anfam 'The Extremes of Abstract Expressionism' from *American Art in the 20th Century* Royal Academy, London 1993
 - 89 Arnold Rüdinger's inaugural address *The New American Painting* Basle, 1958
 - 90 Quoted in *Reconsidering Barnett Newman* p22, the series of essays published after a symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition organised jointly by the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art and Tate Modern in 2002.
 - 91 *Pagan Void* was also the title of one of his paintings. Painted in 1946 this is a large black blob surrounded by blue that has been applied with a palette knife with sgraffiti etched into the wet paint. Apparently loose and spontaneous, it is a tightly constructed composition, the details of which were all pre-determined in sketches.
 - 92 National Educational Television interviews by Alan Solomon and Lane Slate USA *Artists - Barnett Newman* broadcast 20 May 1966. Quotes are taken from the unedited transcript.
 - 93 Newman wrote about the complete series in *ARTnews* May 1966, 65/3 p26 - "It was while painting them that it came to me (I was on the fourth one) that I had something particular here. It was at that moment that the intensity that I felt the paintings had made me think of them as the Stations of the Cross. It is as I work that the work itself begins to have an effect on me. Just as I affect the canvas, so does the canvas affect me".
 - 94 Chagall's human crucifixion paintings exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946 had drawn the analogy from Harold Rosenberg, Herbert Howarth, and others that not only had the world flown apart in chaos but European Jewry had undergone a new mass crucifixion.
 - 95 Gospel According to St John 18:38
 - 96 Hannah Arendt's reports were collected and published in book form in 1963 *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* see p135. As Tony Judt said in his lecture in Bremen 30 November 2007 and later wrote in the *New York Review of Books* vol 55/2, 14 February 2008 "*Eichmann in Jerusalem* represents Hannah Arendt at her best: attacking head-on a painful topic; dissenting from official wisdom; provoking argument not just among her critics but also and especially among her friends; and above all, *disturbing the easy peace of received wisdom*." [Judt's italics] It was this last observation that most impressed Judt. But not everyone. In 2013, criticism of Arendt resurfaced with the release of a book *Hannah Arendt: The Last Interview and Other Conversations* and two films: Claude Lanzmann's *The Last of the Unjust* and Margarethe von Trotta's biopic *Hannah Arendt*.
 - 97 Johann Maria Lenz *Christ in Dachau* 1960
 - 98 Emmanuel Levinas *Jewish Thought Today* 1961
 - 99 Reform Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum *The Face of God After Auschwitz* 1965
 - 100 NET interview by Alan Solomon USA Artists - Barnett Newman - "Grünwald's Crucifixion is maybe the greatest painting in Europe, but one of the things that intrigues me is the act of imagination on his part. That he was not illustrating so much the Christ in terms of the legend... but since he was doing it for a hospital of syphilitics, that he was able to identify with the human agony of those patients, that he was willing to turn the Christ figure into a syphilitic. Now this of course is one of the boldest things that anybody could have done. Yet I think this is part of his genius".
 - 101 Gospels According to Matthew 27:46, and Mark 15:34 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'
 - 102 Clement Greenberg, introduction to the 1958 catalogue *Barnett Newman: First Retrospective Exhibition*. This mutual admiration society was evident when, in return for his praise, Newman noted Greenberg's authority was 'papal'.
 - 103 Wittgenstein's war cry, aphorism 66 from *Philosophical Investigations*
 - 104 Barnett Newman "I was a pilgrim as I painted" 'Unanswerable Questions' *Newsweek* p100, 9 May 1966
 - 105 Bronislaw Geremek, medieval historian turned Solidarity advisor and later the foreign minister of Poland.
 - 106 W Brulez *Cultuur en getal* 1985
 - 107 Mark A Meadow 'Bruegel's 'Procession to Calvary', Æmulation and the Space of Vernacular Style' *NKJ* 1996 p182
 - 108 The extent to which Bruegel copied is arguable; eg Margaret A Sullivan 'Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation' *Art Bulletin* 1981 note 69 p125 "Even when working as an imitator of Bosch, Bruegel rarely borrowed single figures... when Bruegel "did use another artist's work, for his falling magician... the figure is similar to that of Pride in an early Italian engraving." Whereas Mark A Meadow *op cit* p186 "Bruegel borrowed from these numerous motifs and anecdotal details, such as the pedlar with his basket of wares... The windmill... can be found in an image by Jan van Amstel, details of the wagon... in a painting by Pieter Aertson, the market goes... and so forth."
 - 109 Picasso's view on this was that it was not a crime to steal from others, as it was the only way to learn anything. However, he then expressed the view that the ultimate crime was to copy oneself, because that way one learnt nothing. Or as TS Eliot put it with regards writers: 'immature poets imitate. Mature poets steal.'
 - 110 Consider a near contemporary, Jan Gossaert (c1478-1532) who did go to Italy in late 1508 as part of a delegation led by Philip of Burgundy. He stayed for a year, and brought back an elaborate carnal knowledge and subsequently charged his work with the "heightened eroticism" that must have shocked and titillated his clientele. His drawings and nude paintings, all took on an Italianate air. Unlike Bruegel, the trip is documented - more importantly, the influence is clear in his subsequent work. Not sexy, but an example of the style he developed would be the very sensual, marbled flesh tones, carefully modulated forms in the rather contorted body of *Christ on the Cold Stone* a work dismissed for a long time as a workshop piece, certainly not by Gossaert, that has now been cleaned and restored. We had previously only seen this in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. Now "a stunner" in Maryan Ainsworth's words at the time of her Metropolitan Museum exhibition in 2010, Christ is a strangely Bruegelesque figure, looking tense and anxious, perched there on the stone, stripped and crowned with thorns, awaiting His fate.
 - 111 Fritz Grossman comments "to earlier critics Bruegel appeared as the one Netherlandish artist who was quite unsusceptible to the Italian spirit, whereas later scholars have tried to show Italian influences in his work" and then goes on to say the trip to Italy "is exceptionally well documented" a view with which we must disagree: *Pieter Bruegel. Complete Editions of the Paintings* 1955/1973 p15. Echoes of a fresco in *The Triumph of Death* from Palazzo Sclafini in Palermo leave no doubt, nor to his mind does the *Harbour of Naples*, etc., etc. Margaret A Sullivan *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance* 1994 p1 opens with the comment "art of an un-Italianate

- nature such as that by Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Bruegel the Elder". In an earlier article with the same title, 'Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance' *The Art Bulletin* 1991 vol LXXIII/3 p432 Sullivan makes the point that "Bruegel's art was seen as an expression of the true character of the Flemish "people", and his peasants were believed to reflect the spirit of the "folk" and, concurrently, Bruegel's rebellion against foreign influences, Italian models, and humanist, "Renaissance" art."
- 112 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part II* Act IV scene 5
 - 113 Giorgio Vasari *Le vita de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* G Milanese (ed) 1878-85 pp564,569
 - 114 El Greco *Portrait of Don Giulio Clovio Croatia* 84x62cm Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Clovio's reputation as one of the immortals was made clear by his later inclusion in El Greco's *The Purification of the Temple* 41.9x52.4cm oil on canvas c1576 Minneapolis Institute of Arts. In the bottom right hand corner there are four witnesses to the chaotic, violent event – Titian, Michelangelo, Clovio, and Raphael. (Another version without the great four c1600 is in the Frick Collection.) See Webster Smith 'Giulio Clovio and the "Maniera di Figure Piccole"' *The Art Bulletin* vol46/3 September 1964 pp395-401
 - 115 A Bertolotti *Giulio Clovio principe dei miniatori* 1882 pp28-32 and 485 n28, and n5 quoted by Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p16.
 - 116 Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p14. Among others Walter Gibson refers to the four works *Bruegel* 1991 (World of Art) p72; Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones make reference to Bruegel's work on ivory in Clovio's inventory *Pieter Bruegel* 1997 p242; then Max Friedländer refers to an Antwerp inventory of Jan-Baptist Borrekens from 1668 with 'fragment of a canvas painted in Rome by Brueghel' *Pieter Bruegel* 1921 p102; and Keith Moxey reminds us of the inventory of Rubens with its painting of 'the Mont Saint-Godard, by Brueghel the Elder' – 'The Fates and Pieter Bruegel's Triumph of Death' *Oud Holland* 87 2-3 1973 p49
 - 117 *Tower of Babel* oil on panel 114x155cm Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, and oil on panel 59.9x74.6cm Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
 - 118 Webster Smith 'Giulio Clovio and the "Maniera di Figure Piccole"' *The Art Bulletin* vol46/3 September 1964 p398, who also points out p400 "a minute David and Goliath after Michelangelo's composition"; a full page miniature adaptation "of Raphael's tapestry cartoon of the Conversion of Paul" and a roundel of "Giulio Romano's *Stoning of Stephen*".
 - 119 Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p57 n36
 - 120 Bruegel's inscription into the guild of St Luke as *Peeter Brueghels, schilder*, a painting commission and his marriage documents are all transcribed and listed chronologically by Marijnissen et al *Bruegel: Tout l'oeuvre peint et dessiné* 1988 pp11-16
 - 121 Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* was written 35 years after the death of Pieter Bruegel in 1604. Three pages are devoted to Bruegel's life, fols. 233r-234r. The English translation is by Michael Hoyle, Jacqueline Pennial-Boer and Charles Ford and was originally published in *Van Mander* edited by Hessel Miedema 1994-99 vol1 pp190-95. Detailed annotations appear in vol 3 pp252-67.
 - 122 Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* volXIV trans Norden 1976 p14. For Hoefnagel's two etchings with the inscription see Sullivan 'Bruegel's Misanthrope: Renaissance Art for a Humanist Audience' *Artibus et Historiae* 26, 1992 p158 n8 with reference to Grossmann 1973 p16; Orenstein *Pieter Bruegel the Elder drawings and prints* 2001 p6 fig4 re attribution to Simon Novellanus.
 - 123 Jane ten Brink Goldsmith goes so far as to argue that Bruegel's association with the printer Hieronymus Cock marked the point at which Cock moved away from an Italian influence in his production, see 'Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Matter of Italy' *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 23/2 Summer 1992 pp205-234. However, Goldsmith does see "quotations of classical art" in Bruegel's work, the "sense of space and composition... inspired by Italian pictorial tradition" yet admits that "When Bruegel embarked upon a career as a landscape painter, he was, to be sure, taking up a type of painting which for Italians epitomized Netherlandish art – both its strengths and its shortcomings". Why, if he had been to Italy would he do that? Unless he was demonstrating the point made by Lampsonius that "Italians have their brains in their heads, while the genius of Netherlanders is in their hands" – learning versus craft, a view that we do not accept. Goldsmith also sets out examples such as the "Patiniresque *Landscape with Christ Appearing to the Apostles on the Sea of Tiberius*... previously thought to have been executed by Bruegel in Italy" that recent laboratory examination suggests is not even 16th century. The examples set out, and then distanced from, all give a sense of Bruegel's Italian connections whilst denying any proof, hence: "Bruegel looks back to the "old Netherlandish" tradition, and indeed to an "anti-classical" tradition, unaffected by Italian art". However, the general statements just keep coming: "Bruegel's art is not just an affirmation, but also a celebration, of his own tradition, and this came at a time when painters in the Netherlands were attempting to elevate Netherlandish art by attaching themselves to Italian art and Italian notions about painting". Apparently the argument goes, they were all doing it, hence Bruegel must as well, which only again raises the question, if he had been to Italy, surely he would have made use of the experience?
 - 124 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe *Italianische Reise* Palermo, 13 April 1787
 - 125 It is possible that Cornelius van Dalem issued the original prints that may or may not have been printed by Cock. Van Dalem may well have financed the operation but not undertaken the printing. However, the second edition was made by Cock, but with the original date. Subsequent editions were produced in 1601 in Paris, 1610 in Haarlem and 1632 in Amsterdam. It would have been expensive but was obviously very popular. See *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* Nadine Orenstein (ed) 2001 p207; Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 pp156-7; Larry Silver 'Pieter Bruegel in the Capital of Capitalism' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47, 1997 pp125-53; Joris van Grieken, Ger Luijten, Jan van der Stock (eds) *Hieronymus Cock. The Renaissance in Print* 2013 pp372-6.
 - 126 Claude Lorrain has been singled out as the second artist due to an inscription on the verso.
 - 127 Martin Royalton-Kisch review of Hans Mielke *Pieter Bruegel: Die Zeichnungen* (published posthumously, Turnhout 1997) in the *Burlington Magazine* 140, 1998 pp207-8. Mielke refers to a drawing of the straits on two sheets that may be a copy.
 - 128 *Mountain Landscape with Ridge and Valley* c1552-3 pen and brown ink 20.4x29.5cm Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, and *Mule Caravan on a Hillside (River Valley Viewed from a Hill)* c1552-3 pen and brown ink 21.8x30.1cm Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, a sheet that has been copied several times. Both of these drawings have been in dispute over the years as to their provenance.
 - 129 The eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD was witnessed by Pliny. By the time of this painting the volcano had been dormant for 500 years and had become cultivated, covered in vines and shrubs. Despite being considered one of the world's most active volcanoes Etna did not erupt significantly between 122BC and 1669. A few minor eruptions took place at the start of the 11th century, with 'Plinian' eruptions a matter of legend. The dramatic eruption of either Vesuvius or Etna in Bruegel's lifetime were a fiction.
 - 130 Dominique Allart in *Fiamminghi a Roma, 1508-1608: Artisti dei Paesi Bassi e del Principato di Liegi a Roma durante il Rinascimento* Hans Devisscher (ed) 1995 no40
 - 131 *View of the Strait of Messina* pen and brown ink 153x523mm Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels
 - 132 Joris van Grieken 'View of the Strait of Messina A rediscovered drawing after Pieter Bruegel the Elder. A new acquisition for the Print Room of the Royal Library of Belgium' *Monte Artium, Journal of the Royal Library of Belgium* 4, 2011 pp209-219
 - 133 A humanist painter, Joris Hoefnagel, is mentioned in connection with several drawings of Messina by Bruegel in Georg Braun and

- Franz Hogenberg *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* 1572-1618 facsimile possibly printed by Peter von Brachel 1618-23, Amsterdam 1965, and in three volumes, Ron A Skelton (ed) 1980
- 134 Nina Eugenia Serebrennikov 'Imitating Nature/Imitating Bruegel' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47, 1997 pp176-80. A year later, reviewing Hans Mielke's *Pieter Bruegel: Die Zeichnungen* Serebrennikov noted "the art market needs authentication in order to survive... that the quality of a genuine work of art is immediately recognizable to the initiated" as she commented on the author's reduction in Bruegel's oeuvre by over half. That 'immediate recognition' with regards Bruegel's drawings had only just begun to prove highly problematic. *Art Bulletin* LXXX 1 March 1998 pp176-180
 - 135 Sellink 'The Dating of Pieter Bruegel's Landscape Drawings Reconsidered and a New Discovery' *Master Drawings* 51 p294
 - 136 *ibid* p296 and in the following paragraph the quotes are all from pp 296-303
 - 137 *The Return of the Native* 1878 The clash of antithetical ideas rather than an easy flow from one idea into another
 - 138 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The painter and the Connoisseur* c1565 pen and grey-brown ink with accents in brown ink 25.5x21.5cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
 - 139 Book of Job 36:26 "Behold God is great, exceeding our knowledge"
 - 140 Jürgen Müller *Das Paradox als Bildform, Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegels d.Ä* 1999 pp36-39. Müller believes, for example, that *Children's Games* 'plays with the metaphorical implications of games in order to criticise all forms of liturgy and Christian institutions', pp49-54
 - 141 Perhaps, as was said of Seamus Heaney's Catholicism, 'there were words he no longer believed but could not disavow'.
 - 142 Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) *Night* Vaughan lived most of his life in Llansanffraid in Brecknock. English was his second language. *Night* and *The World* were written after 1650 when both his life and work took a religious turn. *Moriendo revixi* – 'by dying, I gain new life' was his adopted motto
 - 143 Terry Eagleton *On Evil* 2011
 - 144 Adam Gopnik *Understanding Steinere* introduction to *Paris France* 2013 pxiii text Gertrude Stein 1940
 - 145 Henry Vaughan *The World*
 - 146 George Santayana *Carnival* from *The Dial: Arts and Letters in the 1920s* (ed Gaye L Brown) 1981 p93

8

Landscape – a paradise regained

Looking in on God's view of the world

Joachim Patinir: The Third Man

Countries of the Mind

Drawing reveals the artist...

– but what does the artwork reveal?

All 'The Seasons' – bringing faith, inner vision,
politics and landscape all together

Entr'acte Cy Twombly

What the art world did next



222 Joachim Patinir *Charon Crossing the Styx* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

Looking in on God's view of the world

"It is only through art that we can escape from ourselves and know how another person sees a universe which is not the same as our own and whose landscapes would otherwise have remained as unknown as any there may be on the moon." Proust¹

T“TO SEE A landscape as it is when I am not there” was how Simone Weil phrased it. I am not in the landscape, yet I can see it. An impossible idea? Not if you consider a viewpoint as personal, and the eyes through which the land is seen as your own eyes. If I am not there do I not know what the landscape looks like? Weil was writing spiritually. Her words were meant to express a spiritual goal: it is necessary to empty oneself, to become a pure, selfless viewpoint; only then could one see a landscape without being there. Better still, God might see it through me. Her point was we are in God's way, we block His view.²

Weil developed this into a theory of art. “All great art gives the following impression: that God is in contact with its point of view regarding the world, with the perspective of it, without either the painter or the person admiring the picture being there to disturb the tête-à-tête. Whence comes the silence of all great painting.” So, when we look at a great picture (something she did not define or give any examples), we are not there. We are only ‘looking in’ on God's view of the world.

The void for which Weil was searching was evidence of the divine. She wrote ‘Letter to a Priest’ the year before she died. It was an exploration of Catholicism in which, at some point, she observed that “for any man a change of religion is as dangerous a thing as a change of language is for a writer. It may turn out to be a success, but it can also have disastrous consequences.” As noted at the start of this book, Bruegel hovered at one of the frontiers of faith, setting out points for discussion in his pictures, hence it is possible to see Bruegel's work as some kind of chronicle of the period. But chronicle carries overtones of dullness, whereas his work comprises a series of vivid and revealing tableaux that remind us how, despite external appearances, many things remain much the same. No more so than with the landscapes, which can be both deceptively simple, and simply deceptive. Yet as a Catholic, still roughly believing, he also alerted his audience through a series of painted reports to what was actually going on. His painting was to become the testimony of the age. Simply being a mere spectator looking on was a crime; he embodied Weil's dictum about the “absolute necessity of bearing witness”. Suffering may well be the best expression of God's presence in our universe, but Bruegel must have been surrounded by suffering. Would it be unreasonable for him to doubt? We surely would. From Christ to Augustine, from Pascal to Auden, it has always been the doubters rather than the believers who have kept up religion's good name. But, again as a Catholic, doubtless a doubting Catholic, he kept up the religion's good name by seeing Easter everywhere, something that should be considered in relation to the Seasons. Certainly sceptical, Bruegel's relationship with God may well, in the circumstances pertaining in the Spanish Netherlands, have been unfulfilled but “one has only the choice between God and idolatry. If one denies God... one is worshipping some things of this world in the belief that one sees them only as such, but in fact, though unknown to oneself imagining the attributes of divinity in them”. The quote is from Weil. Thus, conjuring the structure of sacred space as Bosch did, for example in *The Haywain*, he could lead viewers to mistake it for a holy image as he summoned to their minds that most abject object imaginable, the idol. It was a game he was to play even more dangerously in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Seemingly banal but with Bruegel it became necessary for God to be in the details. He did that by reimagining Bible tales in the context of his day, to translate it into the thought-provoking messy contingent experience of his time, rather than some metaphysical inquest.

Thus his work was to be both timely and timeless. And where he led, others followed. When Patinir painted what were to become recognised as the first purely landscape paintings, he would use them as vehicles for expressing the moral dilemmas faced by mankind.³



223, 224 Patinir: engravings attributed to Cornelius Cort and by Hendrik Hondius

Joachim Patinir: The Third Man

“there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune” Shakespeare⁴

“In short, landscape is the link between our outer and inner selves.” Bill Viola⁵

THE RIVER is running high. We are in a small boat, the ship of the soul.⁶ The decisive moment, the choice with which we are confronted, is in the middle of the river. That choice is stark: Heaven or Hell? But it is still a choice, and one we have to make very quickly. There is little time left. We have been adrift on the sea of life. Now we are heading upriver. A diminished soul looks out from the ferry towards the inviting entrance to Hell, considering its final haven. A less welcoming rocky inlet in the other direction will lead ultimately to Paradise, but the final destination is hidden in both directions.⁷

An oarsman dominates this eschatological drama. He looks straight ahead, his unflinching gaze fixed on us. He is Death, the navigator. His vision and ours, temptation and human judgement, and the fallibility of mankind, are at the heart of this. The path to salvation is narrow and rocky; the possibility for error obvious, free will is being strained. Two conflicting emotions are pulling at the soul, a choice reinforced through geographical iconography that is contrary to what we might expect, and a reversal of the characteristic vegetation the soul in the ferry would anticipate. We are not confronted by didactic moral instruction, as we would be by Bosch, but by an opportunity to express our free will. Which way will our moral compass point? Behind the sailors, and therefore unseen, the weather is closing in over Hades.

The hour of death is upon us. Charon is at the helm at the moment of decision.⁸ (It has been suggested that we may even be beyond the point of no return.) Charon can help us to

chart the path to salvation but the choice is our own. Our ability to do battle with temptation is being questioned, our capacity to see through the Devil is being tested, and the way in which we reflect on our sinful soul under surveillance. The extent to which our spiritual insight, our inner vision, leads to successful critical self-judgement is at the core of *Charon Crossing the River Styx*, a picture of the human soul choosing between good and evil at the hour of death.⁹

The signposts that alert us to the validity of the visible world, and hence the direction in which our journey in faith might take us, test our ability to shift our perspective, and the capacity for moral and spiritual judgement by our inner eye. This pilgrimage of the eye is an illuminating engagement for our imagination as we contemplate the fact that “many are called, but few are chosen” – a pessimistic view of the afterlife reflecting the belief at the end of the 15th century that very few souls would reach paradise. We cannot see the sunny uplands of the Elysian Fields leading to a far off city of the chosen, a Celestial Jerusalem; at the point of decision the road to salvation is hard to find. The alternative appears much easier, but it is an easy way to damnation and Hell once we venture beyond what will turn out to be merely a false paradise.¹⁰ We must think through the implications of everything we can see, and then use our imagination to fuel the religious narrative, as our journey is extended from sight to insight.

Completed around 1520, the painting was without precedent (although the element of a ‘judgemental eye’ may have been borrowed from Bosch).¹¹ It may be a metaphor for something more than simply the choice before us. The Reformation was gaining pace, the soul is turned towards perdition, it appears to have made its decision, possibly the siren voice of the false paradise of Protestantism is calling. Irrevocable or not, it is certainly not an inevitable direction, but for now it appears more tempting than the hard road in imitation of Christ. The decision is ours. The question Patinir asks is, which direction will we take and, arguably, should the Church take?

Jochim Patenier, scildere,¹² Joachim Patinier and Joachim de Patinier,¹³ Joachín de Partimier,¹⁴ Giouacchino di Patteneir di Bouines,¹⁵ Giovachino di Patenier di Bovines and Enrico da Binat,¹⁶ Ioachimo Dionatensi Pictori,¹⁷ Ioachim Patenier, Schilder van Dinant,¹⁸ are all one and the same Joachim Patinir, the artist responsible for *Charon Crossing the River Styx*, and the elusive third man in our story. His ‘signature’ when it appeared, varied, but on four out of five paintings, ‘he’ inserted a D.¹⁹ This may have indicated his origins in Dinant or the word dictus (called) or something else entirely.²⁰ Adding to the uncertainties about his life, he may have trained in Bruges with Gerard David who was registered as a master at the same time (although there is no archival documentation of Patinir in Bruges)²¹ or with Jheronimus Bosch, an idea that also has no substantiation in the records.²² He produced very little, or very little of his work has survived, and certainly significantly less than his contemporaries.²³ The style and quality vary considerably (the work of many hands possibly). He also seems to have copied little but his work was widely imitated by others. With the exception of an Augsburg merchant, one Lucas Rem, we know little about who he worked for, if indeed he undertook many commissions at all. There were perhaps only six.²⁴ If true, the amount of speculative work undertaken was thus unusually high. His early life and career are obscure, and his overall identity unclear. He was born between 1480 and 1485, became a free master in 1515, was visited by Dürer in 1520 and 1521, and died in 1524. He was the uncle of Henri de Patinir, which has been the cause of some confusion.²⁵

Dürer’s praise for the artist and reference to his landschafft caught the imagination and landscape became jargon.²⁶ Dürer’s admiration also led to the idea that Patinir was the first landscape painter whereas there were precedents. As we have seen with Bosch, the fascination with gardens, the impact of the Roman de la Rose, the automata at Hesdin established by Philip the Bold in 1385-89, the importance of setting to a story, and the pleasure of exploring landscape, had all been established. For Bosch, the setting is the stage on which his actors

perform. For Patinir the stage itself became the star. The culture of painted diversion had already appeared. But there were a lot of influences around for reference and consideration.

The landscape traditions from Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden had all made use of brown, green, blue three-colour landscape backgrounds, high horizon lines and established the believable progression from microscopic close up detail to telescopic focus in one image. Petrus Christus, Dieric Bouts, Hans Memling, and Hugo van der Goes were all part of the move to progressively more naturalistic settings. And yet another elusive character, the Master of the Embroidered Foliage, had made a significant contribution to development of the genre, to be followed by the cut-off trees lower horizon slice-of-life imagery of Gerard David, through to Bernard van Orley, and various versions of the Eyckian *St Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata* (an extremely popular painting during the lifetime of Patinir), culminating c1520 with the Master of Hoogstraten's expanded landscape.²⁷ Then there was the work of a friend, sometime collaborator and subsequently guardian of Patinir's three daughters, Quentin Massys, a figure painter, who supplied the foreground group on the *Landscape with the Temptation of St Anthony*, a painting that bears Patinir's signature, and one that clearly owes a debt to Bosch.²⁸ Patinir may have painted the landscape background to some of Massys' pictures. And that is the point. In a remarkable switch, Patinir created a niche market by the innovative device of making the setting of the story his primary focus with religion taking a subsidiary role. "A painting of a saint in a landscape... [became] a painting of a landscape with a saint."²⁹ The balance of the narrative changed.

The importance of the natural setting had also emerged elsewhere. From Jacquemart de Hesdin, and the Boucicaut Master before him, to Patinir's contemporary Simon Bening, the second half of the 15th century in Burgundy, and then Flanders in particular, had seen a flowering of landscape in illuminated manuscripts, devotional miniatures that contained grand natural settings and the illusion of expansive terrain, even within a constricted vertical format. The depth of space had become significantly greater than achieved by the Limbourg brothers in the *Très Riches Heures* together with the spatial unity and the continuity of recession.

But the setting had never before predominated. The stage was further set for Patinir as specific landscapes became more important with such books as the *Miroir historique* and in chronicles and texts that leant themselves to the representation of territory and landscape.³⁰ Added to which there is the influence of Antwerp Mannerism, the leading style during his lifetime, and Boschian motifs, that became more evident in his work as his predecessor's popularity grew during Patinir's lifetime. The hour called forth a new man.

The impact of maps

Before landscape painting, maps were displayed as works of art. Maps from the age of discovery, images of power that also surveyed the fantastic and the mythical, marvel with their intellectual conquest of space. The Venetian cartographer Fra Mauro, a monk in the Camaldolese monastery of St Michael on Murano, saw the world as a huge disc with south at the top, Africa was a vague shape and there was nothing to the west of the Fortunate Isles, the Canaries. In concept remote and arcane, it is nevertheless the earliest 'modern' European world map, probably commissioned by the state of Venice and completed with the help of Andrea Bianco in 1453.³¹ Jerusalem is set in a special vignette, the text is Veneziano not Latin, there is no spiritual or cosmological framework to the map, and the *Earthly Paradise* (possibly painted by Leonardo Bellini) is placed in exile away from the world in a corner. Acclaimed as representing the culmination of medieval mapmaking, synthesizing the traditional 'portolan' sailing charts with Ptolemy's *Geographia* that listed the coordinates of 8,000 places and natural features, this is in reality the first great map of a new tradition.³²

Some years earlier, after Philip the Good and Charles VII had concluded peace with

the treaty of Arras, 19 September 1435, at which the French king had made significant political and territorial concessions, effectively recognising Burgundy as an independent state, Jan van Eyck (or possibly Guillaume Hobit) was responsible for a globe made for Philip in 1440-44 to celebrate matters, establishing the value of mapping as visual accounting of nationalist and imperialistic ambition. Such maps and globes allowed their commissioners and makers to imagine their place in the world. A decade later Simon Marmion was also producing a map for Philip the Good that was still consciously unrealistic in form and content but potent with symbolism. Mixing the biblical with the landscape of Flanders, it was indifferent to prosaic reality, but layered with meaning way beyond the purely geographical.³³

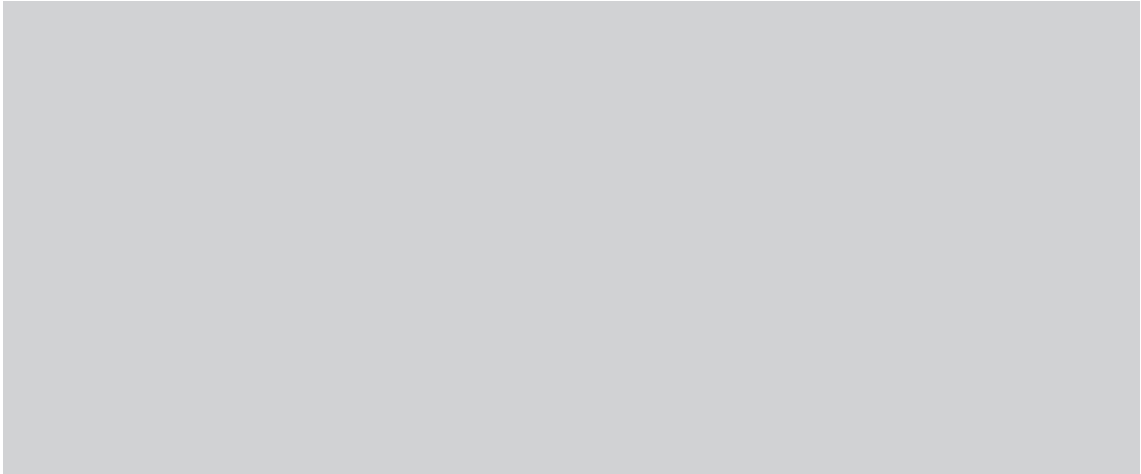
Landscape art and map-making were intimately related, artists navigating an intricate course between biblical history and geography, between their own viewpoint and that of the Church with connotations of the Trinity, the Crucifixion and Noah all sweeping across Marmion's map. It was another 50 years before Martin Behaim made his celebrated 'erdapfel' or 'earth apple', the earliest surviving terrestrial globe and one that Magellan was to consult in order to escape the geographical mentality of the time.³⁴ Hans Sebald Behaim mapped the Mediterranean depicting the travels of St Paul through the Holy Land, Erhard Etzlaub, an instrument-maker, mapped *Das ist der Rom Weg* – the roads to Rome, in time for the Jubilee year of 1500 (with important places of pilgrimage marked along the way) and Dürer's workshop produced an illustrated *Quatuor libri amorum secundum quatuor latera Germanie* – four books of love according with the four borders of Germany, with maps loosely based on Etzlaub and landscapes by Hans von Kulmbach. Lucas Cranach the Elder made a woodblock print with pedagogic intent c1522-3 of *The Position and Borders of the Promised Land* that was to form the basis of maps for 'reformed belief' which, in Luther's words, provided 'a good geography and more correct map of the Land of Promise'.³⁵ Melanchton considered geography integral to understanding the Bible.

Linking religion with geography before the Reformation, *The Haywain* is, "as one 16th century Spanish admirer put it, 'the wagon of hay means the same thing as a wagon of nothingness'" where "Bosch gives this nothing the shape of everything. Bundled on a wagon the hay looks like a misshapened globe, rolling before the vista of the whole world. This vista stretches towards a distant horizon, that is squeezed sideways between paradise and hell. These scenes place [the] world in the cosmic scheme of sacred history... [above which] in the abiding now of eternity, Christ sits in judgement."³⁶ It also links us back to landscape, one where security has been replaced by delusion, a demonstration of the decay the artist sees around him in a godless world.

The pursuit of happiness may be the goal of some, but we live in a chaotic, disorganised, upside down world, where a sad and vulnerable man staggers through a barren, empty land towards an even harsher wasteland once the lumbering caravan of hay has passed by on its way to judgement. It is a treacherous landscape of autumnal abundance fraught with temptation and danger for the individual with his earthly belongings on his back, walking away from a countryside of earthly pleasure, inhabited by people over-indulging, oblivious to their origins in a Paradise garden and their eventual catastrophic destination. As the man attempts to navigate his way he might contemplate St Bernard's sermons recently published in the Netherlands in 1495, that "blessed are those who can live as pilgrims in this wicked world".

An agrarian audience that focused daily on the bread of the Eucharist would be only too well aware that straw was the disposable residue of the wheat from which their sacramental bread was made. It was symbolic of the disposability of lives misspent, the transient nature of the flesh and the ultimate worthlessness of worldly things. In this world, we can see a couple making love in a bush, whilst a voyeur looks on through the foliage set before green hills and blue atmospheric skies.

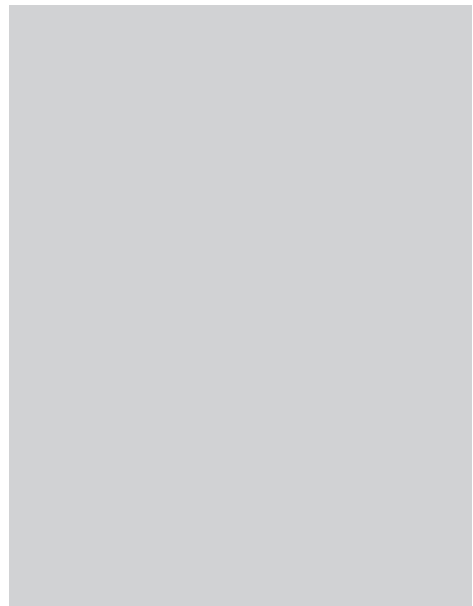
However, in another-worldly Paradise, where rocks give way to curling vines and bursting vegetation, the Rebel Angels are already on the attack not only transforming the entrance to Eden but undermining and corrupting the natural order and taking responsibility for the degeneration of the earth. We see a landscape mutating before our eyes, the wonder and order of nature's Divine design being perverted, strange forms growing at the earth's edge, the very roots of evil. If the pedlar is following el camino de salvación he may be too late.³⁷ The narrow path to salvation will be hard to find for this prodigal son. The landscape itself may defeat him.



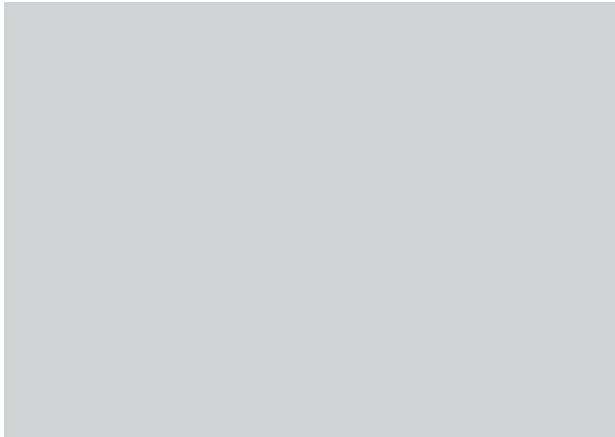
225 Jacopo de' Barbari *Venice* 1500 map produced from six woodblocks



226 Fra Mauro's world map of 1453



227 Martin Behaim's '*erdapfel*' of 1492



228 Mediterranean,
a 14th century Portolan chart



229 World map,
Henricus Martellus Germanus c1490



230 World map of Martin Walseemüller
produced in 1507 with assistance from
Matthias Ringmann and the financial
support of René II, Duke of Lorraine



231 World map of Battista Agnese
produced in Venice in 1542 in the
traditional style of a portulan



232 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Land of Cockaigne* Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek

Countries of the mind

"Memories are like the sound of hunters' horns fading in the wind. Still, they linger"

Guillaume Apollinaire

"... flawlessness is seldom compatible with the life-or-death urgency that makes for great art"

John Richardson³⁸

"Landscape painting is no joke" Ivon Hitchens³⁹

ARTISTS NEED their own landscape. Sometimes this can be a landscape of the imagination, some invented place; an island, a sweep of hills, a plain with a few human figures in it. It may be an area in which an artist can hide from reality; but, more importantly, such a landscape endures because it becomes more substantial than anything in the ordinary world. Yet it is not entirely divorced from that world provided it demonstrates a sense of place.

Where a picture is set can be its most important element – not simply because it locates the predominant atmosphere or creates the appropriate tone, but rather because the place is the story. With that sense of place can also come an awareness of history and thus the sense of change. That sense can encompass a larger meaning; in the lament for a landscape lost or destroyed there is always a deeper sense of life, a sense that informs us all that landscapes must change, just as we change. And that lament may only evoke a memory.

The only real alternative to a changing world ought, in fact, to be paradise. But paradise is lost just as childhood is lost, something that makes the country more acceptable than the city as it is more reminiscent of the past, of some illusory Eden. For some the country will always be no more than a prison of stagnation and immobility, "That land without comfort or solace, where the peasant lives out his motionless civilisation on barren ground in remote poverty, and in the presence of death" sums it up well, sadly as much for the age of Bruegel as for us.⁴⁰

Every generation redefines Paradise for itself, rediscovers the Fall, and the journey into the unknown, to death or redemption.⁴¹ The fears of apocalyptic change are equally regularly renewed and seem to be a part of some eternal transience. Cast out from Eden, the spirit goes through a long period of trial and hardship before finally re-creating its own paradise. The voyage out of security into darkness and danger is like the narrator in *La Chute* who, without any significant ties or material occupations, drifts across country, tracing his own failure back to its roots. In the preface to *L'Envers et l'Endroit* Albert Camus spells it out – "I know from my own experience that a man's work is nothing but a long journey to find again, by all the detours of art, the two or three powerful images on which his whole being opened up for the first time". Paradise may or may not be attainable, the lost Eden re-created in some form when life's journey is complete, but the insistent message is that if the physical trappings of an earthly Paradise are not abandoned at the right time, the emotions attached to them merely decay.

As the late medieval artist considered the quintessential city, Celestial and Infernal, the only lastingly satisfying sight was the horizon, receding continuously before the traveller, as it continually opened up new vistas to him, yet was always with him, a magical trick of nature, the round world eventually leading voyagers back where they came from, in psychological terms, back to himself. We cannot, after all, travel beyond ourselves, the freedom of the open road ultimately a delusion, one of the barriers in life that is insurmountable. Thus the relationship between landscape and the topography was perfectly suited to the imagination of Bosch as he travelled on his savage pilgrimage towards a certain apocalyptic vision of mankind, one he surveyed again and again in an ever-rising pitch of ecstatic agony, an inland voyage as he journeyed inside himself.

Bosch embarks on his spiritual journey from a frame of reference that interleaved

different realities and unrealities, painting things perfectly natural in themselves, but hilarious and terrifying in their wildly inappropriate conjunction, nature meticulously observed in a compellingly real landscape, a receding perspective map, details shrinking with distance. The real does not make the unreal believable, it creates it, in a world turned inside out, a great unstable universe, good and evil infecting each other, freaks of nature in Eden alongside Adam and Eve, a mélange of God's handiwork, successes alongside some early mistakes, life itself seen as a landscape, derived in part from ideas about the uncivilised wilderness of the New World. We live in an age of invented, alternate worlds, yet in amongst the fantasy there is often more truth than make-believe. Even in the worlds of el *realismo mágico* the magic has roots in the real, illustrating it in unusual and unexpected ways. There is just as much realism as there is magic. The magician in his labyrinth, that was Bosch, cartographer to everyone's worst dreams, securely rooted in the land of late-medieval Catholicism, the fantastical and the extraordinary merely reality in its local guise. Finding our way around this domain requires a strong moral compass. Evil was never glorified, if perhaps it does appear a little seductive. Actual countries became private worlds, countries of the mind.

In contrast, for others, the countryside tends to be a place of lost grace, a haven for adults in retreat, and cities the place of adventure and great escape. In such worlds, rural scenes embody regret for a golden past, a vanished innocence; cities come to stand, paradoxically, both for decay and alienation and for hopes of a new life; country houses become repositories of youthful dreams, spiritual mansions of the soul. The mental landscapes of artists – whether moorlands or city streets – can thus acquire the force of powerful metaphors. Landscape art was borne out of a tension between the universal and the local. Its first masters – Joachim Patinir and Pieter Bruegel the Elder – roamed above the earth as if borne aloft on angels' wings, offering mankind a glimpse of God's point of view. That was Bruegel, the mapmaker of Everyman's spiritual terrain.⁴²

Bruegel is that rare creature, a painter who connects us not just with the high culture of the past, but with a lost yet recognisable stratum of folk beliefs, the culture of the poor, illiterate and unprivileged – that is, the vast majority of people in early modern Europe. In *the Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, *Netherlandish Proverbs* and *Land of Cockaigne*, Bruegel records popular festivals, jokes, sayings, fantasies; his art draws its energy from this richly textured culture. Religious conflict, political turmoil, dramatic allegories, are all present in his pictures, but Bruegel's appeal stems from his love of nature.

The earth spreads out before our eyes in panoramic landscapes populated by farmers, hunters and skaters. But it was in nature that he found a vehicle for his ideas, rather than, as Van Mander would have us believe, 'his greatest inspiration'. His landscapes have few parallels in European art and some of the paintings are among the best-loved in existence because they return us to that intimate sense of human beings enfolded into a landscape – at its most beguiling, *The Seasons*. He had an innate and intimate feeling for the forces of the past that animate an entire landscape.

These are real countries of the mind in a double sense – the mind is part of the country, because it has been created by the same powers, and the country is part of the mind.

Dream-world or Utopia

Bosch juxtaposed God's paradise with a fool's paradise on earth shading into the infernal paradise of Hell, in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by the use of perspective, naturalism, and the Renaissance study of the body to demonstrate desire's absolute consummation doomed to destruction in the end of everything we take for granted. The dream becomes a nightmare in this land of excess, release and abandon, mad, lost, deprived of reason, a perfect world gone wrong: Cockaigne to the nth degree – you would not want to live there. Mankind wants to live

in paradise, but seen up close and in detail, or attempt to create it on earth, and it becomes hell, a raw and vivid fantasy of a world on the way to ruin.

Translated into the sunlit utopia of popular culture, Cockaigne was just such a land, a name people in the Middle Ages gave to an imaginary place filled with all the things their own lives lacked, a land of perpetual plenty, it was a medieval fantasy of the perfect life,⁴³ a focus of medieval European literature and the subject of a painting by Bruegel.⁴⁴ As a text about Cockaigne says: "People in that country who are fond of drinking with trusted comrades receive for each fair-sided drink a silver penny. Those who drink till it's coming out of their ears or till their eyes start to water receive a guinea for every drink they've imbibed. And anyone who can empty a whole tankard in one gulp, standing up and without taking a breath, gets free drinks and a gold noble to boot." Food was important not because people regularly lacked enough to eat in medieval Europe, but because most of them simply envied those who had luxury foods.⁴⁵

Literature and art liked to keep these fears alive. We imagine winning the lottery; people in the Middle Ages supposedly imagined houses with beams made of butter, rafters of grilled eels and roofs tiled with pies; a world where eggs had legs, there was a total absence of work, fountains of youth that made the decrepit nubile, sex was available on demand, and there was continuous free booze. Food that pursues human beings – ready to eat – was one of the standard elements of this medieval fantasy-land. Dreamers in this never-never land, Bruegel's *Land of Cockaigne*, is a Luilekkerland of lazy gluttons.⁴⁶ Three men lie under a tree; one, a peasant, fast asleep on his flail; the second, a soldier stretched out on his side, lance and gauntlet lying useless beside him; and the third, a clerk with pen and book, lying on a fur coat, gazing entranced into the air. There is a goose that has laid itself down on a platter to be eaten, a fence woven from sausages, and encircling them, a suckling pig runs round with a knife in its back (cutting out the need for the labour of food preparation) and a half-eaten egg on legs, an invitation to contrast the effort required of people to secure their food since the expulsion from Eden. In Bruegel, the bizarre surrealism of it is rather more than a drug-induced vision: here, the empty eggshells are symbolic of spiritual sterility.⁴⁷ Dreamland carries a religious message: people who have nothing to do but sleep have forgotten their Bible. Adam and Eve were placed in a garden in the first place to work the land, to look after it and enjoy its produce; gardening was morally good, satisfying and life enhancing.

For Bruegel, art was work, and work was a chance to share in God's ongoing creation, using the creativity within us to shape a world, to ignore it was to bypass God. In the sobering context of biblical Christianity work is seen as part of the rhythm of life like the rising sun, something given by God where people might find self-fulfilment, service, even praise. "Is it not better to eat and drink, and to shew his soul good things of his labours? And this from the hand of God." In other words a person can do nothing better than find satisfaction in work – to live was to work.⁴⁸

Bruegel's dream-world points to the ways in which mankind had become distanced from its original condition, not just in giving a whole new dimension to the concept of the ready-made meal. This land of milk and honey, where roast fowl fly straight into your mouth presents a world of carefree enjoyment. Or does it? Looking at the picture do we stand accused of the vices starting with gluttony? Entirely in the moralising tradition of the 16th century Bruegel's print series *Vices* depicted the behaviour and unhappiness of sinners on earth.⁴⁹ Nowhere does he show the punishment sinners can expect in Hell. Bruegel did create landscapes full of monsters, demonic dwarfs and bizarre forms redolent of Bosch to satisfy the commercial drive of his publisher, but here perhaps is a Cockaigne that deliberately sets out to evoke a land of carefree enjoyment the year Alva arrived in the Netherlands. Is it political? Total repression began a year later but it did not take a genius to know what was coming – and Bruegel was

well-enough connected to have been told what to expect.

Survival was all

"Men are pilgrims and, as such, must encounter experiences ranging from happiness to terror in their journey to the divine presence. But they do not make this journey outside their own country."⁵⁰ And so the landscape of the Bible was filtered through the villages and towns of the Low Countries, remade in the territory of the artist's imagination, to accompany pilgrimages and landscapes that were all in the mind. It was filtered through the perceptions of generations of Netherlanders, a land fitted-out with fresh symbols according to equally real landscapes known personally to them, a country of the mind indeed; biblical pastures green as Flanders, Jerusalem the Golden with the spires of Brussels or Antwerp. As for paradise, lost and regained, this was to become some faraway, cogent, coherent, and compelling biblical image of the Celestial City, a place to which the vagabond pilgrim, pack on back, was travelling.

Not content with simply portraying the landscape of Brabant, Bruegel turned to depict the fertile intellectual landscape of his age, and swathed it in a loose covering of contemporary life, topped off by a shako of popular culture. He also turned away from the fashionable Italianising art of his contemporaries to a vernacular style of his own.⁵¹ He did the first as an inevitable result of time and place, the second as part of a critique of human frailty. He is not some anti-Catholic freedom-fighter of a peasant wielding a paintbrush. It is far more likely that he was a sceptical Christian, expressing all the anxieties of a transitional age in his search for artistic expression, whilst celebrating life, questioning faith, and formulating a calculated response to the commissions of a sophisticated audience, as he sought to survive. Survival was the order of the day.

The idea, based as always on Van Mander, of a Flemish primitive idiot savant who mixed with the new urban middle class, and numbered cultured merchants, church leaders and aristocracy among his admirers, providing them and us with proof of the depravity of rural life in all its rustic simplicity and festive conviviality, is a benign view – all in a spirit of humorous tolerance.⁵² Whereas, in reality, from the mid-1550s the country was on the brink of rebellion as a result of tax riots, violations of provincial freedoms, mounting national and cultural self-confidence, the colonial power declared bankrupt, creditors on the Antwerp exchange ruined, a general recession, crop failures, public torture and executions, not forgetting religious upheaval – there was little to be humorous about, from economic misery, to political crisis, to religious persecution. Survival really was everything. But if fear, in the words of Hannah Arendt, is indispensable for survival, the inspiration for survival may sometimes be drawn from the heart of suffering itself – every survival kit should include a sense of humour. As his country was rapidly being transformed into a strange land, one with death for its frontiers, Bruegel painted its survival, occasionally with a humorous touch, whilst speaking of its terrors with what little reality he dared.

"In the Renaissance the art of landscape stood as the paradigm of Netherlandish painting."⁵³ It was all part of "the conquest of visible reality" throughout the period. In the north, nature was a metaphor for truth, whereas in Italy beauty stood for truth. It has been argued that Bruegel's truth to nature was a rebellion against the artifice of mannerism, and the "sophisticated manipulation of pictorial knowledge".⁵⁴ Manipulation it is, because it is not a vision of reality, rural happiness in paint, an eternal unchanging vision of a secure country. The eye of the beholder was being challenged.

He teaches us one thing in particular. Never trust a landscape painting, it will have been manipulated to engender an emotional response. Idyllic pastoral scenes conceal the fact that landscape could be a vehicle for a whole range of ideas and emotions, utilised to explore and express anything. In the case of Bruegel, stability was not one of them. Whether patriotic,

pastoral, psychological, or religious, landscape says something about who we are, and what the artist feels. Bosch transported us to another world, the world to come, Bruegel takes us to another world, equally compelling and innovative, the Low Countries reinvented, where a landscape acts as a mirror to society on the cusp of a great challenge to capture a civilisation under threat. An artist compelled to record a world that might be obliterated reflected the messianic expectations of the time. And like all great art, it makes us look at something familiar in a different way.

Ostensibly pictures of the countryside, sensuous primeval hills, clumps of trees, what we are looking at is a scene set for confrontation and torment, between the forces of good and evil, light and darkness, and personal torment, all told through magical haunting landscape. Highly personal, and reflective of the national mood, an image of a sacred land, nature could be both terrible and comforting. And afterwards, when nations face crisis and change, artists have looked to landscape. Whether landscape can still offer the answer is another question. We may have lost that link which in some way defines who we are, a way of expressing ourselves, tangibly linking past, present and future. Deeply rooted in the land, the cycle of the seasons epitomises a love of evolution and continuity, pastoral, and peaceful, appropriate for mourning times past, an expression of psychological angst, and a celebration of history and tradition. Generations take the land for granted, others need to be reminded how it must be cherished, rediscovered, and reclaimed by everyone.



233 Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Descent of Christ into Limbo* (detail) 1551 engraving
26.2x34.5cm (sheet size)
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



234 The oldest unfinished panel in Netherlandish art or the earliest surviving finished drawing? The signature implies the artist considered it finished.⁵⁵
Jan van Eyck *St Barbara* 1437 Antwerp, MSKA



235, 236 Two drawings after Bosch *The Ship of Fools* and *Death and the Usurer*
Paris, Musée du Louvre



237, 238 Jheronimus Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *St Jerome facing each other across the room*: the same artist or the same workshop?
Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten

Drawing reveals the artist . . .

"I know of no art which calls for the use of more intelligence than that of drawing"

Paul Valéry⁵⁶

"Many are prepared to suffer for their art. Few are prepared to learn to draw" Simon Munnery

"When I draw I see clearly" Vincent Van Gogh

THE BRUEGEL industry was fuelled by prints and by drawings believed to be by him.⁵⁷ With Bosch, drawing became a pleasure in its own right. Where Paul Klee might talk of 'taking a line for a walk' he revealed his inner self just as surely as Bosch displays an important aspect of his personality when he draws an owl in a tree or a surreal land strewn with eyes. A line is a line is a line, as Gertrude Stein might have said. As to whether Bosch simply produced sketches for his paintings or drawings that were always destined to be finished works in themselves is debateable, even if it is generally accepted that he did both.

The paucity of extant drawings makes the problem of attribution particularly difficult. The fragmentary nature of working drawings that served a utilitarian role in the workshop where they would be repeatedly handled, frequently substituted, seldom if ever really 'finished', and often ignored (Netherlandish painters frequently laying out their compositions directly onto a grounded panel) all add to the dilemma. One reason so few drawings survive from the earliest period of work in the 15th century is doubtless the expense and inevitable reuse of drawing surfaces, their disintegration through constant use, and their negligible value as collectors' items at the time, rather than any restriction in the pursuit of drawing, something that did not change until the 1520s when, for example, Dürer recorded the sale of portrait drawings to donors in Antwerp. That was in 1521.⁵⁸

Drawing is the basis of all art. Its status in art schools continues to be undermined by everything from an obsession with technological advances and new media to the disregard of tradition. However, drawing renders thinking visible. It is all about looking, and learning to see, self-discovery, and is a way towards making unexpected connections, those juxtapositions that lead many to emphasise, and believe in their spontaneity. The raw creativity associated with drawing is exciting, not simply because of its invention, but because the language of drawing enables us to escape the narrow confines of so much scholarship. And more importantly they reveal an artist's capabilities – more than anything, they can demonstrate a weakness in artistic talent.

Drawing is a language, and once learned, is seldom forgotten. Elegant, authoritative, sketchy, tentative, intense, introspective, it demands skill and effort and looking and patience. Yet however avant-garde, innovative or unusual, drawing is a part of practice. It is a part of the process but it also has its own techniques. Notwithstanding the development of that technique, it is arguable as to whether drawing was 'invented' or at least became important in its own right, at the time of Bosch. As an essential and continuous part of practice, the drawings by Bosch that are considered by many to be the first such finished artworks in themselves, can equally be read as the development of ideas, their rendition as unfinished and unresolved as the ideas themselves.

The degree to which ideas developed from a first sketch achieved a different importance at different times, hence its different value. The generation of ideas in sketching, their speed, economy, corrections and second thoughts, are clearly some way from the construction of a final presentation drawing. The drawings by Bosch lie somewhere in-between. The difference between an autonomous finished drawing and a working sketch should not be difficult to grasp. And yet there is a persistence in thinking of his studies as finished works. Whilst a presentation drawing may well be, or at least appear, unfinished, his drawings appear more as formal evidence of finished artwork than as complete in themselves. They do not constitute independent practice.

Unsigned studio documentation that may be difficult to conclusively attribute may also still constitute 'autograph' work where the hand of the master is by its character, albeit subjectively, identified. The sum of the indications are that, for some, up to 40 sheets of drawings by Bosch are extant, the technical facility of the artist, the 'handwriting' of the drawn lines, and the imagination inherent in the concept, all attesting to their attribution whilst it has also been argued that as few as four maybe attributed for certain.⁵⁹ The agile eye and thinking hand of Bosch is there in the skill of these idiosyncratic exercises, the aesthetic and emotional power of the work as dramatically involving as the paintings, his art of envisioning signalled what was to follow. Notwithstanding the primacy of drawing, and difficult as it may be to identify, the intention is what matters, because we firmly believe that artists do know what they are doing and why. Hence drawing is both a route to self-discovery and as such is a way to understanding an artist. Drawing is both an activity and an artefact. But it is also a design, a part of the preparatory work for a painting.⁶⁰ Alberti wrote about painters drawing around the space occupied by an object, "setting down the outline" he called it in order to establish its limits.⁶¹ Here we have the question: we must establish the differences between casual, scattered, disorderly visual notes, indifferent to scale or composition; the careless confidence of a sketch⁶² – a rough initial drawing that by definition is unfinished; the sketchy doodles and decorative marginalia to be seen within illuminated manuscripts – the subversive and occasionally scandalous content of which might act as a commentary on the more finished imagery;⁶³ the medieval copy-books produced for studio assistants;⁶⁴ the preparatory studies for a print that might be, and often were, destroyed by the cutting tool, or the pounced preliminary drawings for a panel painting often incorporated into the finished product and kept for potential reuse; and finely painted underdrawings – all of which are by definition a rehearsal for the main event. Then, in a medieval echo of morality and with expressions of regret there are the second thoughts of *pentimenti* when the artist repented or changed his mind, including the tracings and retraced experimentation with an inchoate image, and finally there were finished drawings.⁶⁵

Whereas it is the absence of a line that we the audience might conjure from our imagination in order to complete a drawing that defines an open-ended sketch, it is the magic of independent autonomy that should be inherent in the graphic skill of a finished drawing. A few strokes, the genius of brevity, a gestural flourish that in the minds of many links drawing with inspiration, the idea that the flair of apparent speed defines artistic ability, manifest spontaneity defining the sophistry of their production, may or may not be present in a work for presentation.

Proficiency in drawing implies far more than undertaking a mimetic exercise. It involves thought. "All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking"⁶⁶ – thinking that involves looking, something that can be taught, but sadly seldom is today. Intellectual and visual acuity once forced art students to think. The dynamic of drawing cannot, however, disguise the fact that drawings are a problem. That brings us back to history, to Bosch and to Bruegel.

Recording, copying, documenting, simulating, capturing, codifying, complementing – a drawing is all of these and more. It is a tool and it is independent, and there lies the argument. Theories of drawing have been a problem ever since theoreticians struggled to come to terms with it during the Renaissance. The underdrawings seen in Bosch's work show a variety in both style and execution that certainly mean many, if not all or most, were not by him. Which simply means that within the studio system it was unlikely that the master prepared the underdrawing. Who had what responsibilities is unclear and likely to remain so. It does not invalidate the attribution of a painting.

Variations in underdrawings are one reason that a second master's oeuvre has been 'discovered' alongside Bosch, that of the left-handed Master of the Prado Haywain, something that arose from there being two versions of *The Haywain*, neither of which are universally

accepted as being by Bosch.⁶⁷ The provocative and controversial conclusions do not end there: arguments are now put forward for several Doppelgänger including the Master of the Bruges *Last Judgement* and the Master of the Munich *Last Judgement* to whom some of the drawings frequently attributed to Bosch, are now also credited. (For example, *The Hell Ship* has been credited to this fictitious Bruges Master, and a curious man in a basket being beaten with a stringed instrument, together with drawings that copy both *The Ship of Fools* in the Louvre, and the *Death of a Miser* in Washington, to the Prado Haywain Master.⁶⁸)

The son of a painter, a member of a family of painters, and related to painters, Bosch worked in, and later led, an active workshop. The family studio at one stage may have mustered as many as ten relatives of Bosch. He did not work alone. Masters collaborated with other masters, assistants were apprenticed to masters, there were journeymen and fully trained painters who travelled from master to master whom Spronk has dubbed “stylistic chameleons”.⁶⁹ We do not know about the practice within that workshop. Almost certainly, the collective organisation of work will have meant that there will have been both vertical collaboration within the workshop, and co-operative horizontal collaboration with others outside the workshop. A great many pupils must have passed through what was a highly successful business. They will all have made contributions to the work of the studio during the various phases of production from underdrawing to surface paint. Drawings should offer corroborating evidence as to an artist’s paintings, but underdrawings do not.⁷⁰ At some stage, Jheronimus must have been the family’s most talented and accomplished member, but to determine his hand in a painting on the basis of underdrawing is not credible on the available evidence of working practices within 15th century workshops. Who did what where and when is a tempting game to play, but with our present state of knowledge, it is only that, a game – and it can be a very misleading one at that. The family’s creative genius may well have formulated a concept, determined the overall composition and then applied the finishing touches, he may have delegated the entire commission to assistants, he may have won the business, and agreed the financial details (in the case of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* this may well have been done by Goossen van Aken for which he “stood surety for delivery” on 30 June 1481) or he may have undertaken the majority of the work on a particularly prestigious commission.⁷¹ There are clearly large differences in technique (*Christ Carrying the Cross* across the room from *St Jerome* in Ghent for example) lying alongside correspondences (*The Garden of Earthly Delights* and *The Haywain*). Thus the underdrawings may well have been carried out by different people working in the same workshop, one of whom on the basis of probability may well have been, indeed almost certainly would have been, left-handed. The significant variations in quality, even within a single work, indicate as much. “The Bosch workshop was a collective employing different masters, each with his own identity, and at least one genius who, from time to time, delivered a painting of his own.”⁷²

Drawings and false pretences

Looking in particular at Bruegel’s drawings, it is clear he combined the Netherlandish tradition begun by Patinir⁷³ with the landscape drawing of Titian and Domenico Campagnola.⁷⁴ (One of his least inspiring and least accomplished works was in fact a pastiche of Campagnola.)⁷⁵ Then in Antwerp, some time in 1554, Bruegel began to produce less explicitly so-called Italian-influenced work. For example, the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* drawn in 1555-6⁷⁶ showing the Virgin and Joseph (drawn in the style of *The Deposition* by Bosch)⁷⁷ looking towards a distant monastery in an Alpine landscape, includes pointed cliffs and rocky outcrops similar to the style of Patinir, such as *Mountain Landscape with River and Travellers* that incorporates a double rock formation similar to the imagery of Cornelis Massys and Patinir.⁷⁸ Van Mander praised Bruegel’s naturalism over Patinir’s imaginary landscapes but there is more in common between the two than many critics have recorded – and the much-praised naturalism

exhibited in drawings, subject to later re-attribution.⁷⁹ Of greater interest surely is the legacy of Bruegel and the impact that his work had on progressive landscape art from Goltzius onwards. If Goltzius was a Netherlands revelation, why is his skill of draughtsmanship at times so reminiscent of Bruegel? And why do his mountain coastlines resemble compositions of Bosch, Patinir and Bruegel? While Goltzius emulated Bruegel, Jacob Savery forged him. Why should anyone be surprised? Bruegel's inventions were good business. As Bruegel emulated Bosch, working creatively with the forms of his predecessor, so he himself was emulated in the manner of an aesthetic ideal by others. The art market was open to mannered variation, direct imitation, plagiarism, direct replication, copies of indiscriminate and inevitably diminished quality that together would, in time, shape a nation's art by false pretences.

The nature of such emulation to meet the needs of a new art market surely tells us something about the history of the times.⁸⁰ The issue is less how history served art than how art can serve history as a basis of cultural and social criticism. In the 12 Large Landscape prints⁸¹ by Bruegel (published by Cock c1555-6) *The Flight into Egypt* is the odd one out.⁸² It is one of two in the series that arguably were not designed by Bruegel.⁸³ Whilst all the others have a high mountain view, here the panorama has gone in favour of a closely viewed fragment of nature with elements that lack unity crudely combined.⁸⁴ These landscape prints connect with the tradition of Patinir, but whereas Patinir subordinated religious and mythological scenes to landscape, Bruegel integrated landscape into his highly structured compositions. The artificial nature of Patinir has been replaced by a degree of realism inserted into composite landscapes by Bruegel.

This series of naturalistic conceptions, based on vistas supposedly seen as he crossed the Alps, became Bruegel's most widely circulated and celebrated work. Landscape had never featured in prints to such an extent before. Their broad sweeping unity combined biblical narrative with landscape, small figures in scenic foregrounds overlook a middle ground and precipitous backdrops in the distance. Karel van Mander considered that 'he teaches us to represent, without much effort, the angular, rocky Alps, the dizzying views down into a deep valley, steep cliffs, pine trees that kiss the clouds, far distances, and rushing streams'. In 1604 Van Mander was sold on Bruegel – but the prints were the invention of the Van Doetecum brothers. Made after Bruegel drawings, or most likely preliminary sketches rather than finished drawings, the reputation of the 'Master of the Mountain Landscapes' is debatable. The six 'Large Landscape Drawings' were combinations of elements included in the prints and other sketches.

As the craze for collecting Bruegel increased, so did the appearance of 'his' drawings. At the end of the 16th and in the early 17th centuries "virtuoso emulations" appeared.⁸⁵ The acclaimed Views of the Alps for example, were long considered masterpieces by Bruegel until the first tentative suggestions appeared in 1925, made on the basis of quality and style, that they might be by a pupil of Hans Bol, Jacob Savery. In 1935 it was noted that two drawings dated 1562 included elements unbuilt before the 1590s and in 1986 the entire group was consigned to a portfolio of forgeries, 25 drawings.⁸⁶ Watermarks indicating they were drawn on paper produced nearly 30 years after the death of Bruegel were the clue to their unmasking. (This puts them at the very end of Savery's career which only raises other questions.) Whilst these were clearly intended to be passed off as the real thing, others did emulate their peers without any intention of forgery. Goltzius made drawings and prints in the style of Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, and Bruegel.⁸⁷ Jacques de Gheyn II made a print from one of Savery's drawings in 1598. He obviously thought it was by Bruegel because he inscribed it Breughel inv.1561.⁸⁸ A tribute rather than a forgery, *Landscape with a Mule Caravan on a Hillside* appears to be signed by Bruegel but is dated 1603 to remove any ambiguity.⁸⁹

Jacob's younger brother, Roelandt Savery, worked for Rudolph II in Prague for nearly ten years. Those years were decisive, providing much of the source material for the rest of

his career, including a group of *naer het leven*, studies from life. Did he join the ranks of the deceivers or was his work merely misattributed? In Prague, where some of the familiar people to be seen in his figure subjects could be found – the beggars on crutches, peasants huddled in layers of clothing, the hopeless standing figures contemplating nothing but emptiness, seemed so like what might be expected of ‘Peasant’ Bruegel that 80 drawings were considered signature by specialists and laymen alike until the 1950s. But rather than Flemish folk of the 1560s, these were Bohemian boors and rustics from the next century. Gradually, local Jews were spotted among his subjects, a Habsburg headdress from the province seen here, countryside Czechs over there; they were all paradigmatic examples from Prague. Were they sketch studies for paintings, or were they intended to be passed off as the work of Bruegel? According to his biographer, Arnold Houbracken, the younger Savery died insane. According to art history, until 1975 the drawings, in some quarters, were still reserved for Bruegel.⁹⁰



239 engraving by Philips Galle, after a design by Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Christ and the Disciples on the Way to Emmaus



240 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Landscape with St Jerome*
Washington, National Gallery of Art



241 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Wooded Landscape with a Distant View towards the Sea* Cambridge, Harvard University



242 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Pastoral Landscape with a Farm and a Windmill* Washington, National Gallery of Art



243 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* Staatlichen Museen, Berlin



244 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Mountain Landscape With River and Travellers* British Museum



245 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Mule Caravan on a Hillside*
Paris, Musée du Louvre



246 Etching after Bruegel the Elder
Soldiers at Rest



247 sometimes attributed to Jheronimus Bosch
The Deposition London, British Museum

– but what does the artwork reveal?

“Bruegel was the very antithesis of the Renaissance artist. There is a popular theory that the artist takes the torch from a predecessor and hands it on to a successor. In this case, as in many others, this is sheer illusion. Bruegel’s immediate successors mean very little. His son Pieter was an uninspired copyist. His other and more gifted son, Jan, stuck to his modest speciality”
Max Friedländer⁹¹

RENAISSANCE imitation and its subsequent competitive stage emulation, must be considered with regards Bruegel’s development and transformation of the visual language of Bosch. The Bosch industry lasted for a hundred years and then declined rapidly when the market for copies dried up. The authenticity of a number of works attributed to him is in doubt now as much as ever; his signature was doubted from soon after his death, none of the works are dated, hence chronology is arranged by theory as much as anything – stylistic development being difficult to assess in an era when the subject matter was chosen by the customer, and subject matter determines the style commissioned.⁹² Various hypotheses continue to be put forward with regards fragments of possibly incomplete works, “fabulous constructions are built upon quicksand” and technology settles surprisingly little just as it does not make moral arguments redundant, it only intensifies them.⁹³

Yet Boschian themes shaped imagery for a generation; they were imitated, engravings derived from his monsters and hybrid creatures, *Last Judgements* copied, replicas, outright forgeries produced and doubtless commissioned, all in an attempt to cash in on the morbid fascination with his demons, saints and sinners. And, as noted by De Guevara c1560, followers allowed their devotion to run away with them as they signed the master’s name out of sheer reverence, por devoción de su maestro. In short, he became a brand. Jan Mandijn and Pieter Huys signed their imitations, most did not.⁹⁴ Some of the Bosch vocabulary was developed by Patinir, particularly with regards the overall structure of some of his paintings, small figures inserted into continuous panoramic landscapes, the high horizon line, an occasional ruined hut and hybrid demon, with distant cities and an earthly paradise some way off from the immediate land of menace and evil. Some elements of Bosch half-length Passion scenes may be seen developed in Quinten Massys. Jan van Hemessen also took on half-lengths, exaggerated the close up, and was occupied with saints in their wilderness and even an *Extraction of the Stone of Folly*.⁹⁵

The burgeoning print market in Antwerp was serviced by Hieronymus Cock and his firm Aux Quatre Vents among others with engravers such as Pieter van der Heyden producing work, creative imitations ‘after Bosch’, for whom Pieter Bruegel sometimes produced ideas in the spirit of Bosch, elements of which were lifted from his forerunner’s paintings, and occasionally signalled by such inscriptions as ‘Hieronijmus Bos inventor’.⁹⁶ Thus Bruegel became a part of the Bosch legacy by way of countless imitations, inventive variation, and spiritual pastiche. Whilst his creatures amuse more than they alarm, and delight more than they dismay, we are engaged, hence it took him some time to escape the soubriquet of the ‘new Bosch’. Bruegel continued to be engaged by Bosch, evidenced by some of the hybrid monsters in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, elements of inversion in *Dulle Griet* as the women march towards the gaping mouth of Hell, and the universal wasteland of the horrors of Doomsday in *The Triumph of Death*, that conjure the tortures and pessimism of his predecessor. Then Bruegel too became a brand in his own right, imitated by his sons, and then by others.

Bruegel & Sons

Next to Bruegel, his sons would appear like chameleons of one colour, the merely talented alongside his genius, proven through his ability to reinvent himself like Picasso or Stravinsky or Stephen Sondheim, continually reinventing form, seeking out new content, the creative breakthroughs, the sudden understanding of what one is up to, of what the craft requires, the things that transform a picture and make it live. Despite his brilliant facility, coming to terms as an artist with the knowledge that nothing is ever easy, overcoming the challenge he sets himself, challenges that finally resolve themselves technically – the doing of it is all. Added to which, he was a man with a mission, whereas the work of the sons looks overstated, sentimental, ordinary. They painted, rather than experienced. That was the difference – and it shows. However, “vast numbers of paintings are attached in one way or another to the family name and separating the wheat from the chaff is not always a straightforward matter.”⁹⁷

There is something to be said for nepotism – if one has the right calibre of son.⁹⁸ Pieter Bruegel died in 1569 in Brussels, exactly when and how is not known. Pieter Brueghel the Younger was born in 1564/5 and Jan Brueghel in 1568.⁹⁹ Their mother, Maria Coecke, died in 1578.¹⁰⁰ Pieter II was taught to paint by his uncle, Gillis van Coninxloo the Younger, and Jan by Mayken Verhulst, their maternal grandmother.¹⁰¹ The lack of paintings by their father available on the market, and the copies with forged signatures that were appearing in order to meet the increased demand following his death, led them to work in the style of their father, Pieter the Younger, almost exclusively. He was extraordinarily prolific: Klaus Ertz listed over 1400 paintings in total. Of 127 versions of *Winter Landscape with Skaters* and *Bird Trap*, 45 were considered to be by Brueghel the Younger. It was his “cash cow”.¹⁰² Jan Brueghel the Elder, however, was greatly admired by his contemporaries, yet has today become downgraded.¹⁰³ From being mentioned in the same breath as Rubens, the visual repertoire of ‘Fluweelen’ or ‘Velvet’ Brueghel ranged from potted bouquets to rural subjects, biblical narratives to the ‘travelled road’ and pastiches of his father’s work. Never their father’s pupils, they both nevertheless milked the unprecedented demand for his work among collectors who “fought over the few paintings by the master that were still on the market.”¹⁰⁴

So, from father to son, art descended from a sublime profession to a journeyman’s trade. And it was done to meet market demand when the hinge on which Renaissance art hung, swung away from the celebration of Christianity and civic pride to the service of tyrannical vanity and self-advancement. Historians tend to recount the story of art as if artists operated in a more or less aesthetically autonomous world, in which new ideas, rather than new commissions or practical demands, determine style.¹⁰⁵ In the case of the Brueghels, family business only confuses the issue further. The tradition of copying was well established in the Low Countries, but the extent to which the family produced faithful replicas alongside copies of deliberately lesser quality, in competition with inferior copyists, insignificant pasticheurs, and outright forgers, is a story of some relevance here. Not only does it lead to a greater understanding of the work of Pieter the Elder, but also reveals how confused attributions of, for example, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, could arise, and gives clues as to both working methods and lost compositions.¹⁰⁶ So just as Cranach the Elder’s supposed copy of a presumed *Last Judgement* may eventually be a clue to unlock some of the mystery surrounding Jheronimus Bosch, so Pieter Brueghel the Younger’s vast numbers of copies may hold many of the missing clues to his father. Through his use of cartoons and preparatory drawings, and variations in the composition of some of the copies, the legitimate successor may reveal the riddle of the original.

Stylistic analysis may lead us to distinguish the touch of an artist, but technical studies and scientific imagery that reveal what is below the surface of a painting, together with investigation of the materials used to create the works through optical techniques that can uncover successive phases of production, may also help us to separate the work of the master

from his collaborators, and by considering historical copying techniques distinguish that of an arch replicator from assistants who may have assimilated his approach, as we search for the hand of the real master.

By virtue of the fact that most of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's paintings had been sold and were certainly widely dispersed by the time Pieter Brueghel the Younger began to copy them, the accuracy of his replicas requires explanation. Infrared reflectograms that revealed the underdrawings gave clues as to the hand responsible for laying out the composition, to the transfer techniques employed, as well as to motifs that were inserted or omitted during the course of the painting. Direct tracings of the outline of forms within a picture further reinforce the arguments in favour of the use of cartoons across series production of the same composition.

The last 15 years of Bruegel's life were some of the bloodiest in the history of the Low Countries: religious persecution of heretic Protestants, peasant revolts, economic crisis, the Beeldenstorm wave of iconoclasm, the arrival of Alva's reign of terror and persecution; just listing it is frightening. Power and piety were not an easy fit but Bruegel stayed out of trouble. He appears to have appreciated and understood the limits of Catholicism whilst his epistemological humility enabled him to depict subjects in a sufficiently ambiguous way to appeal both to those in power and those with a jaundiced view of power. He did not work for the Church but on behalf of the new breed of collectors: Giulio Clovio on behalf of Cardinal Farnese, Nicolaes Jonghelinck the Antwerp merchant, possibly Hans Frackert the German merchant, and Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, a confidant of Philip II who had several works in his palace in Mechelen before it was ransacked in 1572.¹⁰⁷ Jean Noiret, the Antwerp Mint-master had some country scenes painted on canvas, and Ortelius had the grisaille *Death of the Virgin*. From the 1590s onwards Archduke Ernst of Austria, the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II, and the Archbishop of Milan Federico Borromeo began collecting Bruegel in earnest. By 1627 the Gonzaga had 17 works and the inventory of Peter Paul Rubens' collection lists two portraits, two works in tempera, and four other paintings many of which were acquired by the dealer Peeter Stevens who already owned six works including a portrait of Pieter Coecke's widow from 1566, a grisaille and a tempera.¹⁰⁸

With Bruegel's own death in 1569 the popularity of his work gained impetus. Engravings from Bruegel drawings and paintings appeared (*Four Seasons*, *Battle of the Money Bags and the Strong Boxes*, *Wedding Dance in the Open Air*, *Land of Cockaigne*, the *Festival of Fools*) but then prints began to appear naming the artist as inventor for which no known previous reference exists: two prints of river landscapes with mythological themes, *Christ and the Disciples on the Way to Emmaus* and *The Triumph of Time* – "one of only two works whose iconography is based on themes of classical antiquity".¹⁰⁹ That was just the start. The name had a cachet that existed to be exploited. The price of his paintings soared.¹¹⁰ Straight copies were nonetheless rare before the next century whilst the artist's subject matter and themes were harnessed by artists for their own reasons, the aforementioned Saverys, Maerten van Cleve, Hans Bol, David Vinckboons, Pieter Baltens, et al.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder did not replicate himself. When he did make use of the same subject matter he radically altered the presentation. Neither did he have a studio to back him up. Other than the early project where he worked alongside Peter Baltens on an altarpiece on behalf of Claude Dorisi, there is no mention of associates or association with any partner or atelier or evidence of his paintings ever being worked on by anyone other than himself. Of course, if Van Mander is to be believed, there were pupils, on whom the master played practical jokes, a story "probably invented to embellish the account".¹¹¹ But then, those pupils, like the trip to Italy, and the peasant drawings that turned out to be Savery's may be just a compound of Chinese whispers and wilful elaboration.



248 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Hunters in the Snow* Winter
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



249 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Gloomy Day* Early Spring
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



250 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Spring*
Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina¹¹²



251 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Haymaking* Early Summer
Roudnice, Lobkowitz Collection



252 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Harvest* Summer
New York, Metropolitan Museum



253 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Return of the Herd* Autumn
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

¹¹² Frequently grouped with other paintings under such popular generic titles as 'peasant labour and leisure' or 'peasant festivity and work' the concept of seasonal work permeates much of the writing about *The Months*. "Thus sheep-shearing or planting and sowing – or, alternatively, some version of spring hunting on horseback, counterpart to *Hunters in the Snow* – might have formed the theme(s) of the missing image. In 1565 Bruegel created a *Spring* drawing... offers

almost every activity associated with the season that then began the year" Larry Silver *Bruegel* 2011 p335 is typical. Created in the same year as the paintings, displaying activities associated with the missing season, "The lost painting... continues to intrigue art historians who, for instance, take Bruegel's drawing of *Spring*... as their visual clue" Manfred Sellink 2007 p202

All 'The Seasons': bringing faith, inner vision, politics and landscape all together

"Reality and Appearance. Things do not pass for what they are but for what they seem; few look within, and many are satisfied with appearances." Baltasar Gracián¹¹³

EASTER 1565 fell on 22 April.¹¹⁴ The year began at Easter. Since Constantine, the chief festival of the Christian year had marked that fact. Bruegel had painted *Procession to Calvary* in 1564, the year his court sponsor, Granvelle, had been recalled from the Netherlands. At some stage, during that year, Bruegel also received a commission from Nicolaes Jonghelinck.¹¹⁵ The commission was for a set of paintings representing the months, seasons or periods of the year.¹¹⁶

Was it site specific? Did Bruegel know how and where the pictures were to be hung? It has been assumed that the paintings were hung as a decorative scheme in Ter Beken, Jonghelinck's house outside of Antwerp, probably the dining room.¹¹⁷ They would have been positioned above the wall panelling to form a broken frieze around the room.¹¹⁸

Why broken? If Tijs is correct in his reconstruction, and the dimensions of the room are as he calculates, three works on each short side of the room with the main painting located above the fireplace makes perfect sense. Also possible, but less likely, would be to have hung them in a line down the length of the room with 35-40cm between each picture.¹¹⁹

Why not?

Jonghelinck owned no less than 16 paintings by Bruegel that included the *Months*, plus two other series of paintings that according to Van Mander all had their separate rooms.¹²⁰ If Van Mander is correct, and if the dimensions of the room suggested by Tijs are anything like correct then the question arises what might have been hung in the room with the *Seasons*? This could only be pure speculation based on inventories of Jonghelinck's known collection: another cycle perhaps?

We have to attempt to think ourselves into that space. Guests sitting down to a meal would not have seen them particularly closely. They could only be examined standing up. The paintings were not linked in a panorama. They are independent. Contiguity is not an issue. Each image is special. They tell a story, historical images from another age. The thin free brushwork, individual forms built up with economy, sketched outlines reduced to swift notations, and colours applied across landscapes, for the first time in western art, viewed as an independent subject.¹²¹

Or is it? The views of the countryside and the atmosphere Bruegel creates to capture the time of year were extraordinary, yet as the figures recede into their location it is usually assumed, wrongly in our view, that nature takes over, that it is the landscape that is overwhelmingly important, and that seasonal change is the artist's subject, whereas these panels are rooted in late medieval books of hours. Widespread throughout Netherlandish art of the 15th and 16th centuries, and no longer the exclusive preserve of the nobility, these books were still prefaced by a perpetual calendar of high days and holy days with illustrations of topical agrarian activity for each month. Bruegel moves the tradition on significantly: the nobility are absent as the focus moves to busy common people and the elemental force of nature. But within them there is a divine order devised to make people think.

Landscape is merely the vehicle.

That hidden order, only in part understood today, would prompt discussion without in any way being capable of misinterpretation as heretical. Inquisitors could always be presented with harmless landscapes, whereas dinner guests might be engaged by challenging conundrums,

in a voyage through a “painted world [to make them] experience, and reflect on, the following of a spiritual path in the real, material world”.¹²²

Bruegel not only painted people at work, he showed them in the absence of nobility.¹²³ When we look at these unconventional pictures we have advanced way beyond the pictorial motifs of books of hours. They thus represent both continuity and change; images within a pictorial tradition but with a change in content, style and in their representation – the unchanging cycle of life and activity enveloped in landscape’s seasonal change. But are they landscape paintings? Was that the artist’s primary intention, a set of paintings that show the sequence and diversity of the seasons with an atmospheric intensity?¹²⁴ Because they establish “the characteristic moment of each season”¹²⁵ they are frequently referred to as “the first, great self-contained landscapes of Western art”¹²⁶ and “the high point of his creative activity”.¹²⁷ But they do far more than that.

Landscape is the peg on which Bruegel hangs his faith.

It is a very well organised peg. There is a sequence of predominant colours creating an overall balance within the set: pale green for early summer, yellow for high summer, gold ochre for autumn, white for winter, blackish-brown for early spring and potentially blue for springtime.¹²⁸ The pictures are all approximately the same size.¹²⁹ Specific and yet timeless, the series flows. The ordered days, throughout an ordered year, creating an ordered course of life, delivered unbroken stability. Themes, colours, and sizes combine to engender pictorial unity. They share a common horizon line and the vantage point is the same. They all convey mood: the luminosity of early summer; the languorous warmth of an oppressive summer; the threat inherent in autumnal unease; the sharp, short, cold embrace of wintry days; the menace and gloom of early Spring; and then – the empty space, Spring.

The catch is that they are all superficially a straightforward illustration of country life: they follow the conventions of Flanders and Italy from Simon Bening to the Grimani Breviary – gathering hay and picking vegetables, reaping wheat, bringing in the cattle, a time to hunt and have fun, and preparing for the next summer with pollarding trees and so on. But just as they are concerned with man’s relationship with nature they concern his relationship with the world as God’s creation, the eternal verities, the unity of mankind with the land, whose life revolved around the Church. Hence, the highpoint of the year was the beginning of the year, Easter. The missing picture is therefore not just the beginning and the end of the story but the centrepiece, the stand out item in a circle that never stops turning.

Their overall realism has led to only perfunctory study of individual details, the descriptive approach effectively suppressing the symbolism of a picture’s overall content in favour of identifying a few motifs. They are full of the allegories of life’s pilgrimage, the individual within the landscape being as important as the landscape itself. They are seductive. As ever, Bruegel wants us to be involved. As his characters stride home from the hunt or the haymaking they draw us into his world.

The pictorial narrative stems from late medieval devotional painting where it served as a visual guide for a meditation on life, generally more wide-ranging than the events set out in the picture as we are enticed into searching for a deeper meaning in the broader context of the subject of the picture as a whole. The pictures demand our involvement. The audience has to interpret the scene. As our eyes travel across the landscape we are expected to consider and interpret the details in a search for meaning. If we are blind to the morality of the Gospel we will miss it. The pilgrimage of life is of course central to the beliefs of Christian humanists. The question arises, where was Bruegel headed?¹³⁰

His client was part of the largely humanist merchant elite of Antwerp. To what extent was this just a commission, or was it something more? A way for Bruegel to demonstrate his

own thinking at a dangerous time, particularly when his other major client had been dispatched to Franche-Comté.¹³¹

If we can assume anything about being alive in the Low Countries in the mid-16th century, it is that religious belief was being challenged, threatened, argued, and fought over. As 1564 wore on, the King was preparing to suppress heresy at any cost. The background to the work is clouded in an especially bad winter, economic misery,¹³² religious persecution, arrival of the Inquisition, diocesan reorganisation, and the growth of a Netherlandish resistance movement.¹³³ As we have already noted 'this was a dangerous time to express a view on anything'.¹³⁴ And it became increasingly so.

THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE asked concerning the number of paintings that would complete the series, the possible content of the missing picture or pictures, and what might have happened to it or them, are all based on the supposition that it was a series. Is it a series at all? If it is, or if it became one in the execution rather than the planning, or whether once commissioned and started it was ever completed, are all perfectly valid questions to ask that have not been adequately addressed. Considered a landmark in the development of European landscape painting, they at times disappeared, going unremarked for centuries.

Four of the five paintings in what is considered a series are signed and dated, and all five are listed in an inventory of 21 February 1565 belonging to Nicolaes Jonghelinck. The fact that four are signed and dated 1565, in other words shortly before the list was made, is in itself intriguing enough. After Jonghelinck's death in 1570 and the contents of his estate were sold, the *Seasons* are not listed as part of the sale. Later, six paintings by Bruegel representing the 12 months of the year were listed in the Account Book as belonging to the Governor of the Netherlands, the Archduke Ernst, from 1593 to 1595, by his secretary Balasius Hütter, a fact confirmed by an inventory of the collection following the Archduke's death. 'Six paintings representing the twelve months' had been presented to Ernst together with a tapestry in eight parts on 5 July 1594 by the city of Antwerp that had in turn bought them from the dealer Hane van Wijk – a fact recorded by Hütter.¹³⁵ An early 17th century inventory also mentions each picture representing two months, with their figures.¹³⁶ By 1659 the number of paintings had become five, according to an inventory of the collection of another Governor, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, drawn up on his return to Vienna from the Netherlands. The paintings do not feature in an illustrated catalogue drawn up by David Teniers of Leopold's collection published in 1658, but they are referred to in the later French edition of 1660. The reference is to six pictures whereas only five are listed in the 1659 inventory.

Why? Who wrote the anonymous letter in the French catalogue describing artworks unknown to Teniers? Could it be that one picture was significantly different to the other five and thus open to interpretation as to whether it formed a part of the series? Could it be that a very compelling composition that was liable to be considered both relatively straightforward and bewilderingly complex and enigmatic, one where many of the protagonists are oblivious to the impending drama, a picture so special that it was never copied by those arch-copyists, the artist's sons, gave cause for some alarm? A picture where the authority of the Church over the provenance, authenticity and use of religious imagery, was potentially itself under attack? A picture open to misinterpretation as anti-Catholic, painted in the year that the artist's sponsor at court was recalled from the Netherlands, the picture of a man involved in his country's crisis of faith?

Why not? Bought by, and presumably commissioned by, Jonghelinck in the same year as the *Seasons*, then property of the City of Antwerp and later Archduke Ernst in 1595, in the collection of the Habsburg emperors in Vienna, intriguingly together with another painting of the same name by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, an image some way from the mastery of nature for which he was singled out and praised during his own lifetime, one that even superficially could not be

construed as yet another expansive and realistic interpretation of Netherlandish scenery, in short one where the rain has fallen, the wind is up, the weather is unsettled, and the colours stand out sharply in a late springtime scene, Christ carrying the Cross in the *Procession to Calvary*.

The Procession to Calvary expresses a fear that Christ is being overlooked in a power struggle, that in the face of horror faith may be lost, and that it represents, just possibly, a turning point in the artist's own beliefs, away from conventional Roman Catholicism.¹³⁷ The medieval world collides with the modern, spiritually and artistically, as the timeless world of God is sacrificed on the Cross of humanity's oppression. Bruegel's identity may be shrouded in mystery but his beliefs are clear for all to see.¹³⁸

It was 1564. Given the circumstances and given that he had accomplished something new, a devotional picture that involves the audience in an image that was both highly challenging whilst being in no way anti-Catholic, Bruegel had to calculate a way to move from the spectacle of the Passion to present the spectacle of the year. He had painted a picture (for the same client) that coincidentally marked the beginning of the year, but to continue in a similar vein would become increasingly dangerous. What did he do next? He found the drama of life in the drama of work.¹³⁹ And Bruegel found God's echo in nature. The linchpin of Calvary is the windmill, widely used during the late Middle Ages as symbolic of the Eucharist, an aide-mémoire of the ultimate sacrifice¹⁴⁰ and used for the purpose of "dividing winter from spring" and hence, arguably, the position of the wings signifying both the movement of the heavens and the fate of the individual bearing witness to the medieval concept of 'perpetual passion'.¹⁴¹

The cycle we see in nature – of birth, life, death and rebirth, is a parallel to the belief at the heart of the Christian message. The circles of the *Procession to Calvary*'s composition mirror the cycles of nature and life – the death of Christ another cycle ended. The wheeling composition asserts both the inevitability and continuity of the event. The great wheel of space that turns through Bruegel's landscape rolls right across the timeless stability and certainty of the system of institutionalised belief. The annual cycle of life is held up as a mirror to the world of ignorance and prejudice. It is Man's foolishness that prevents him from finding salvation. It is only nature and landscape that is immaculate, well ordered, pure and beautiful. It is a suitable counterpoint to Calvary. He paints it with equal reverence.

At a time when the Apocalypse had been continually predicted, confidently expected, and genuinely anticipated, a meaningless and destructive end to history terrified people. However, the idea of apocalypse as a calamity or catastrophe is to misunderstand the word; its Greek meaning is revelation or uncovering, specifically in the sense of pulling back the veil, meaning that the truth of history will sooner or later be revealed. The absence of any revelation is the key feature of catastrophic time. By contrast, the hope or expectation of revelation is precisely what makes time apocalyptic.



254 Spring / April-May



255 Early Summer / June-July



256 Summer / August-September



257 The year began at Easter



258 Autumn / October-November



259 Winter / December-January



260 Early Spring / February-March

Bruegel pulls back the veil on his own beliefs at the same time as he shrouds his fate, and that of his country and religion, in the cryptic symbolism of humanist education. This artist is a natural storyteller. He shared the common sense, popular wisdom and moralizing attitude of his contemporaries. A Rabelaisian without being coarse, and a moralist for his age, he might reflect Erasmus: "I believed I had found the way to insinuate myself, as it were, into weak minds and to entertain and heal them at the same time."¹⁴²

There is no lack of reverence, no question in our mind of the sincerity of his faith. But his world is real, he looks, observes, records, the world around him as he sees it, visually the sacred is secularized in Bruegel. Communicating in code was only to be expected. He was careful. Bruegel's criticism was not nearly as aggressive as some would like to think. It is that content of allusion that inspires the diverse interpretations and misconceptions. The transient nature of the intellectual climate that produced that work was the reality of the age in which he lived. Thus Bruegel reflects his age. But he also transcends it. He reaches across the centuries, his message universal, directed at us as much as his contemporaries.

He locates Christ in the everyday. The Procession goes through late springtime puddles to the beginning of Christ's final triumph, a tragic moment marking mankind's failure, an end and a beginning, for Christianity, for the Seasons, and for Bruegel. *The Procession to Calvary* may be the unifying image that gives a divine calendar purpose. The provenance of the painting is consistent with the *Seasons*. It was in the right place at the right time, spans the missing dates, is only marginally larger than the others (approximately 50mm higher by 70mm longer), has the right colour palette, and gives a focus to the cycle of the year: it is the beginning. It may not have the work associated with April and May: sheep shearing, ploughing and sowing, but to look for those activities is to miss the point.

An artist of the soul, and the soil, he records the ordinary 'smelting into passion the commonplaces of life'.¹⁴³ His spirit is not confined by the countryside, only liberated into the eternal as he invites us to look at his world to see the divine in the things we take for granted, going beneath the surface to show us an inner meaning so that one day, we may finally recognise the face of God, a God of surprises and disguises, everywhere. Everything carries hints of Heaven.

Christ is in the world if only you can find him, just as it may be difficult to find the concise religious content of the other five paintings, hidden in the pictorial evocation of the everyday. We have to look, to see, and to discover the rainbow of redemption, Christ 'the wine-press' in the promise of the vineyard, the spiritual blindness of the hunters in their disregard for Christ at the inn, a veiled reference to the Magi and Epiphany, a 'rosary of haystacks', labourers ignoring a shrine by the roadside, the death in life symbolism of a dead branch. All of them are small vignettes within a rich visual experience, not small in meaning, but incentives for meditation, that question and balance our sight and insight, visible and invisible, revelation and belief, receiving Christ and being blind to Him as the parade goes by – true followers or following the crowd, a message of true Christianity being within, mere conventional religious showmanship being without.¹⁴⁴

In all of this, the audience is engaged. Falkenburg called the *Seasons* a "veiled manifestation of the history of salvation" reflecting the pattern of time as Augustine envisaged it, sin and redemption. Veiled certainly, but not a refuge from history.

The 'arrow of time' of the history of salvation is all there in the *Seasons*, and it is all there again in the beginning and the end, on the Cross.

Entr'acte **Cy Twombly** The changing seasons

BY DISCUSSING the work of contemporary artists alongside old masters I hope to come away refreshed by both. We might also sense just how much we have lost by throwing away the common educational inheritance of classical allegory and myth. Cy Twombly comes into the category of contemporary old master.¹⁴⁵ If you reach 80, still going strong, and give your works rather grand, classical titles, you are certainly nudging the public in that direction.¹⁴⁶ With a name that sounds like it came out of Hollywood, one so evocative of the scribbles, squiggles and squishy, sexual scratches he splurges across huge canvases, that the art world has already made Twombly a saint – beatified before his death. He appears these days trailing clouds of hype. “Without exception, museum directors and curators look at a Twombly and see the clouds part and God appear surrounded by angels. Twomblys for them are revelations about the spiritual essence of life on earth.”¹⁴⁷ Spontaneous improvisation it may be, excitingly chaotic scribbles, an energetic new visual language that was, and still is, highly passionate, his career has progressed with disciplined logic from youthful epiphanies to mature epistemologies. Crude, chaotic, magnetic, feverish, raw, primeval, (and gratuitously pretentious or poetic, take your pick), he orchestrates each explosion of lust. They do explode, they are violent in their execution, and they are sexy, the canvases “like a soiled sheet after a wild night”.¹⁴⁸

This is hands-on art. As David Sylvester has pointed out, their urgency and pent-up energy make Pollock look positively sober. Pollock works from a distance, Twombly gets stuck in. This is a stream of consciousness by the James Joyce of paint,¹⁴⁹ laceratingly autobiographical work “to bestir the hearts of men and angels”. Paint is squeezed from the tube directly onto a canvas and then worked, smeared, with his fingers. It is pooled, dripped, encrusted, clotted and brushed. The making of marks is what he is all about.

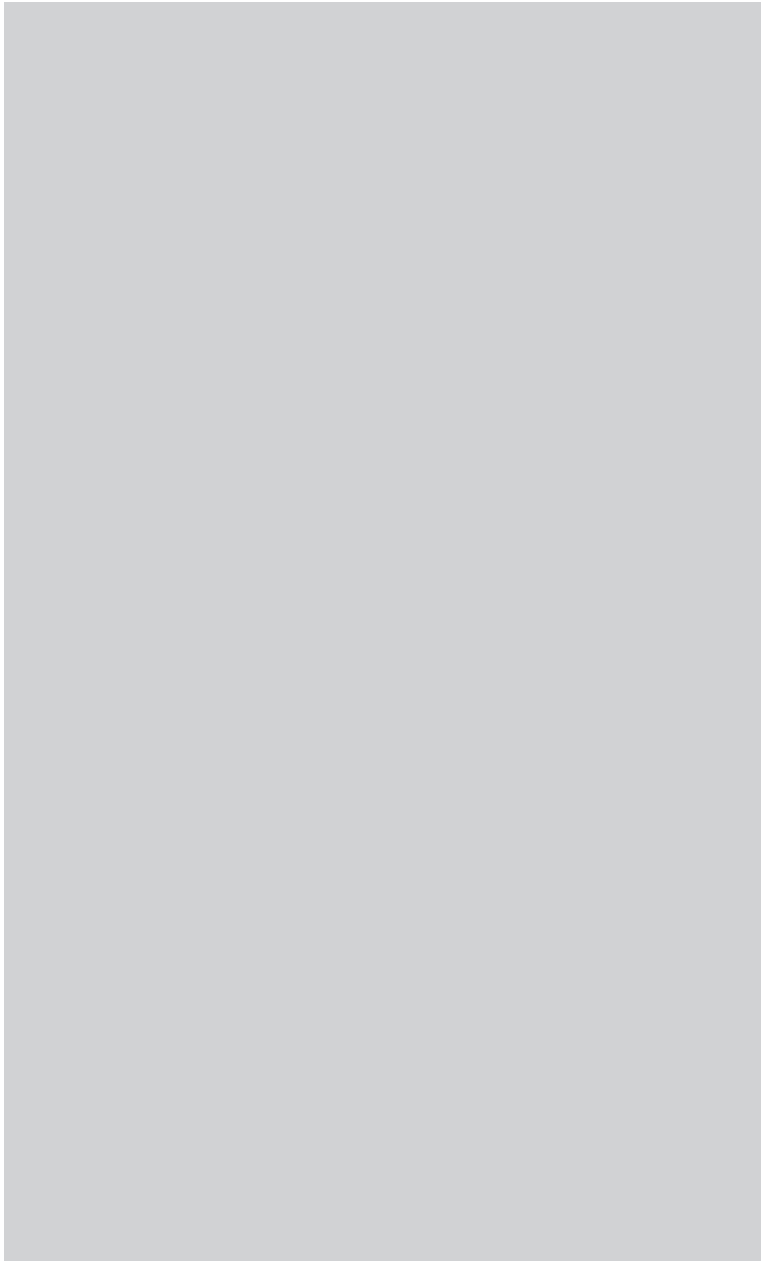
The marks erupt onto the canvas as he lets himself go.¹⁵⁰ We have to decode them.¹⁵¹ One critic believes he innovates by stripping away,¹⁵² “an old trick” that links Twombly with the 16th century “when painters decide to remove saints from the background, thereby inventing landscape painting”.¹⁵³ The historical link is well made.¹⁵⁴ Twombly admits to an obsession with history of art. Buried in the mists of time and his paint, Twombly’s canvases are his theatre of operations. In amongst the orgy of colour, the allusions and evocations,¹⁵⁵ and the literary refer-ences,¹⁵⁶ are all low key, like something in a private notebook – only this notebook is mostly several square metres in format. He prefers enigma to being explicit. The apparent headlong speed of their execution makes these masterful scribbles result in something like a vivid cross between a calculated renaissance sgraffito and obscenities from a public toilet, classics with the eternal verities of life. They have a real punch. That they are hard-hitting is Twombly’s surprise.

Considering the seasons as a subject, it is difficult to avoid Twombly’s *Quattro Stagioni*, a suite of four tall paintings that the artist made twice over in the early 1990s.¹⁵⁷ A bloody red purple *Primavera* is “a row of complex red gash and scratch-marks”. A liquid, shimmering acid *Estate* is “three yellow wounds”. With deep reds, greens and yellow *Autunno* is “like tomatoes and other fruit thrown at a board, impacting, sticking, juices streaming”, when the wine of memory can best be savoured, and *Inverno* is “a blurring collision of white-greys and evergreens”.¹⁵⁸ Each one makes an archetypal journey in the search for identity.

Twombly has a real sense of the past, something he uses to reinforce that identity, meshed with memory, tradition, nostalgia and a belief in progress over time. The lush, late paintings are nothing if not optimistic.¹⁵⁹ Panofsky believed that with his late great style, Titian had transcended himself as an artist. Rare as this is, I believe Twombly’s energy is taking him in that direction.¹⁶⁰

Sensory, visceral, mysterious, all his pictures make you want to get closer. They evoke Rome,

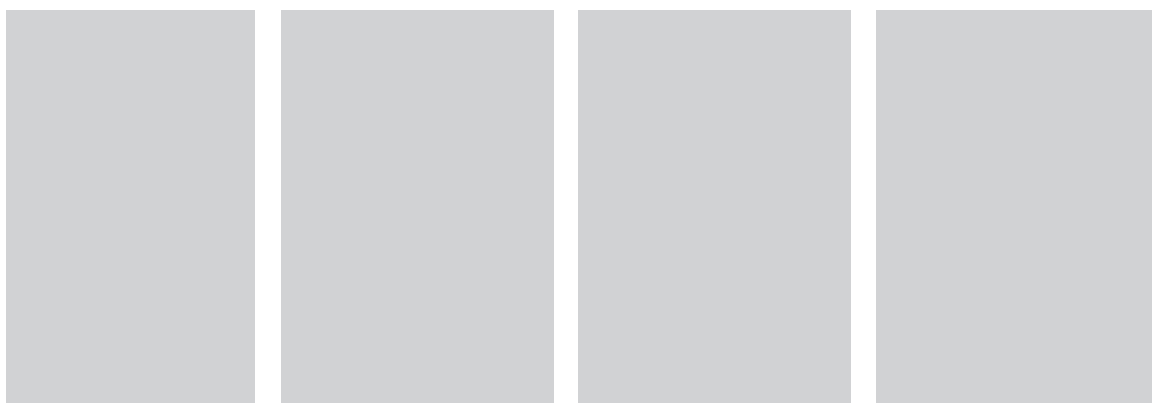
his home for over 50 years, the city suffocating in silent heat. They are immediate, all hot and sticky with saturated, ripe rotten colour, their suggestiveness hidden in paint. He paints like a young man, that unbridled exuberance and passion, only the results are so assured and confident, that they clearly come from a mature, experienced hand; quirky, youthful energy and a love of wet paint fused with a considered plan that may take up to a year to prepare.¹⁶¹ It is the accumulations of an apparently impetuous rush of marks, transformed into carefully orchestrated chaos, something that on this scale is clever, sly, sophistication requiring conviction that only comes with experience. Twombly is not for everyone. He is a polarising figure. For some he is a porcupine of a painter, they try to get close, only to retreat fast. His "palimpsest of the half-begun and never-completed" has evolved into a "language of contrary touches, stray thoughts and inimitable gestures."¹⁶² It looks unmade and provisional. It looks so easy, anyone could do it. You try it.



261 Cy Twombly
Untitled 1988 [Rome]
Oil and water-based paint
on shaped wood panel.
Overall 262.7x160.7cm
Access # 1994-52.5
Photographer: Hickey-
Robertson, Houston
The Menil Collection,
Houston, Gift of the artist
© 2014 The Cy Twombly
Foundation



262 Christine Holz *Viewing Twombly's 'Seasons' in New York*



263, 264, 265, 266 *Quattro Stagioni (A Painting in Four Parts)* 1993-5. Twombly, Cy (1928-2011) photographs © Tate, London 2014
Primavera acrylic paint, oil paint, crayon and graphite on canvas 3132x1895x35mm; *Estate* acrylic paint and graphite on canvas 3141x2152x35mm *Autunno* acrylic paint, oil paint, crayon and graphite on canvas 3136x2150x35mm; *Inverno* acrylic paint, oil paint and graphite on canvas 3135x2210x35mm. © 2014 The Cy Twombly Foundation



267, 268, 269, 270 Twombly, Cy (1928-2011) *The Four Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter* 1993-94. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Synthetic polymer paint, oil, house paint, pencil and crayon on four canvases; *Spring* 312.5x190cm; *Summer* 314.15x201cm; *Autumn* 313.7x189.9cm; *Winter* 313x190.1cm. Gift of the artist. Accession Number 613.1994.a-d
 © 2014 The Cy Twombly Foundation © 2014 All four digital images, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence



Arts Naturam Accurat, nisi et Ars per Naturam glet: Natura Artem internarat, nisi et Naturae nihil artem glet. Alumnus Adhuc emulata, quā licet adfectus est: Adhuc Amulatum alienata, quā dūm proficua est. agage duo, Artem Naturae, Naturae fœdus locat: agage duo, Naturam Artem, Artem fœdus sufficit. Vnde in Arte Natura, quam Patris manus expogit. Vnde in Naturā Artem, quam Filii Genus assignat: idem, Naturā ambiat. Virgo Pulchra, Herculem chorū inferat: hunc, Arte progente Marjatus Olym, ædes flumen reduxit. reddicentis faciem Lucij, inque facis nŕ Patrem in Filio nŕ: adhuc tūm Torrigera, nihil agis nisi utque tū superis est.

*Datum (Filio, hunc in illo, feli, utrumque fœdus): Artem, Naturae
Destinator, cultor, admirator, amator Sac. Cas. Mai. sculptor
(Regius Sæbler, exhibet. oo. 120. vi)*

271 Egidius Sadeler and Bartholomeus Spranger *Bruegel-Brueghel* the intentionally ambiguous portrait of 1606

What the art world did next

“What is life, after all, but a caravan of lifelike forgeries?” Robert Coover¹⁶³

IN 1597 JAN BRUEGHEL the Elder painted *The Triumph of Death*.¹⁶⁴ The date he painted it is clearly marked on his version, but in all other respects it is a replica of the painting in the Prado. The following year he copied a *Sermon of St John the Baptist* and dated it 1598.¹⁶⁵ These paintings represented something he did ‘on the side’, probably out of love for his father; it was not his main activity. Fine as they were, and are, they are not the work of an artist aspiring to distinguish himself. Unlike his brother, he did not set about tirelessly reproducing the work of his father, whereas Pieter the Younger never distinguished himself other than through reproducing the work of their predecessor.

Did he even aspire to?

Inique facis nisi Patrem in Filio nosci. An engraving of 1606 by Aegidius Sadeler of Prague framed by an allegory from Bartholomeus Spranger is an intentionally ambiguous portrait that was largely ignored until 1974. Who is it? Pieter or Pieter II: take your pick. A face similar to both the father’s appearance published in 1572 in Lampsonius’s *Effigies*, and the son’s as he appeared in Anthony Van Dyck’s portrait c1630.¹⁶⁶ The likeness of one to the other has been exploited to make a visual point; the text implies ‘you are being unjust if you do not recognise the father in the son’.¹⁶⁷ An accompanying text explains the allegory, suggesting Minerva took the father away and Mercury returned him to life as the son. The individuals, their portraits, and their work, merge one into the other, a reincarnation, ‘two-in-one’.

This did not go unnoticed or unchallenged; Jan Brueghel the Elder’s monument to his father in the Church of Notre-Dame de la Chapelle in Brussels has a plaque that includes the words *aemuli frustra imitantur*, imitated in vain by followers, was perhaps, but only perhaps, a comment on the work of his brother.¹⁶⁸ As to why it was the younger son who took charge of this memorial only raises other questions of filial devotion.

Klaus Ertz listed 91 versions of the *Peasant Lawyer* of which he considered Pieter II responsible for 25, for the *Sermon of St John the Baptist* he attributed 24 to Pieter II out of the 32 he counted, of 36 copies of *The Adoration of the Magi* he attributed 26, of 36 known copies of the *Flight into Egypt* the Younger Pieter produced around 25 and, as previously mentioned, 45 of the 127 versions of *Winter Landscape with Bird Trap*.¹⁶⁹ Easy to criticise, it is important to remember that by the time Pieter II began his career as a master in the autumn of 1585, the art market in Antwerp had crumbled, along with nearly everything else. The galleries that previously contributed to the rise of the Antwerp art market had disappeared; the panden of the 15th and 16th centuries under ecclesiastical auspices and their successor under the aegis of the local authority, the Schilderpand on the upper floor of the New Bourse had gone too, in a fire in 1583.¹⁷⁰

The city was a shadow of its former self; it was bankrupt and devastated. The country had been laid waste, waves of economic, political, and religious migrants had deserted along with merchants, financiers, and cargo ships since the Scheldt was blocked, first by the Spanish and then the Dutch. From being a leader of the world’s economy, Europe’s northern hub and most glittering metropolis had collapsed. The brain drain that followed included much of the city’s creative talent.¹⁷¹

Given the lack of a market for new work, and the reference material that was available to him at home, the temptation to make literal copies of work that was so much in demand must have been irresistible. Product innovation gave way to process. Pieter Brueghel the Younger’s first dated painting was *The Massacre of the Innocents*.¹⁷² It was 1593. Between registering at the

Guild 1584-5 and 1593 nothing is really known about him, it is all surmise. Did he travel to see his father's works in various collections? Did he establish his atelier and hire assistants? Nine apprentices to Pieter are listed in the Liggeren of St Luke's Guild for the 1590s, each of them staying for several years before leaving to establish their own studios. He certainly married Elizabeth Goddelet and began a family in 1589; they eventually had seven children.

By the time the market recovered, and it did relatively quickly, with export-led growth to France and German-speaking central Europe in the second decade of the new century as the new dealers developed their business alongside the artist-dealers such as David Teniers and Jacob Jordaens who mixed their professionalism with trade.¹⁷³ Hane van Wijk was just one of these new specialised vendors from whom the Archduke Ernst had bought the original *Children's Games* and the city of Antwerp had bought *The Months* as a gift for the Archduke on the occasion of the Joyous Entry in July 1594. By then Pieter II was firmly established in the repro business.

The collecting habit had developed by the turn of the century from the princely classes to the middle classes, had acquired a European dimension, with private collections increasingly being accumulated as can be seen in some of the *Kunstammer* of the period by connoisseurs with commercial objectives such as Cornelis van der Geest, the Charles Saatchi of his day.¹⁷⁴ Alongside the commissions generated by the militant Jesuit-led Catholic revival to replace the art that had been lost, the business revived. With this flourishing market came the copies. With copies came series production. Pieter Brueghel the Younger became an extreme exponent of this new art.

There had always been copies, the practice has been well-documented. As a discipline it has always played a part in western art. Jan van Eyck made two copies of *St Francis receiving the Stigmata*, and in 1470 Anselm Adornes of Bruges left one to each of his daughters in his will.¹⁷⁵ *Notre-Dame de Grace* in Cambrai was distributed via copies made by Petrus Christus (three) Rogier van der Weyden, Dieric Bouts, and possibly adapted by Gerard David. A further 12 copies were ordered from Hayne of Brussels in 1455.¹⁷⁶ *The Descent from the Cross* now in the Prado was copied in whole and in part on many occasions.¹⁷⁷ Copies of the work of Rogier van der Weyden were made both during and after his life. Having trained two generations of assistants and collaborators the skills were in place to meet the demand for 'this great and illustrious Fleming' who was among the most renowned of his age across the whole of Europe.¹⁷⁸ He had managed to attract foreigners like Hans Memling and Zanetto Bugatto to work with him. His heirs, Pieter and in turn Goswijn, inherited the studio's stock of drawn and painted 'patterns' – reference material including compositional drawings and figure studies, that enabled them to reuse his artistic repertoire up until 1514, updated occasionally to meet the prevailing taste. Material like this was surprisingly freely passed around. "There was nothing fraudulent in the passing on of models and patterns from master to collaborator, from shop to shop, or even from town to town. Drawings and models were common property, exchanged and shared, as archives attest, though unlicensed borrowing did sometimes result in a dispute that had to be settled in court."¹⁷⁹

The greater their success the more masters must have relied on their assistants. Rogier and the Master of the Flémalle in the 15th century, and Joos Van Cleve and Pieter Coecke in the 16th, all had significant workforces in order to cope. And the greater the demand the more nefarious the practices used by the new dealers to complete the orders; if necessary, the work being moved around from one workshop to another during production, or copies made by an atelier other than the one responsible for the original.¹⁸⁰ The quality of the copies varied enormously. Spain appears to have been a good market for poor reproductions.¹⁸¹ Information exists about Jan Brueghel the Younger's work, but not that of Pieter Brueghel the Younger.¹⁸² "There is no archival data relating to the way he sold his works or the price range into which they fell. Nor is there anything to tell us whether his works were commissioned by collectors and dealers or produced on spec, or whether they had more success in the domestic or the

export market.”¹⁸³ The general lack of precision in recording work by a member of the Bruegel family only adds to the confusion. But there is no doubt that Pieter II produced large numbers of copies in response to market demand, that those copies were deliberately different in terms of quality according to who worked on them and their eventual destination, that the demands for his father’s work were so great that the workshop not only collaborated with others but subcontracted work out in part and in toto, that anonymous copies were produced by others outside of the family’s quality control, and that the work of the family studio was itself copied in order to satisfy the market; copies of copies came onto the market.

Prestige collaboration was one thing, “the stars in Antwerp’s artistic firmament”, but what happened here was something else, productivity was all as repetitive endeavour became the norm.¹⁸⁴ Serial production required new ways of working, and the sharing of roles.¹⁸⁵ In order to preserve the brand a degree of legerdemain was required. In an attempt to monopolise the market, premium copies from the House of Bruegel required the Master to apply the finishing touches to a painting in order to ‘guarantee’ his involvement, at a time when everything that was produced in the studio was assimilated into his oeuvre. And this, just as less than premium copies from elsewhere started to flood the market. It must have been a hard act to maintain in the face of so much competition. But then, just as the word brand exercises a hypnotic hold on business today with its promise of opening a window onto a fusion of identity, reputation and commerce, so it may be a mask of marketing, now and then.¹⁸⁶

The sliding scale of prices for originals, copies, autograph, assistant or workshop, charged by Jan Brueghel the Younger is an indication of what may have been the practice within the family firm, whereas dealers and the open market showed little concern over such niceties.¹⁸⁷ Karel van Mander had seen a difference between *de principael Tafel* and *de geconterfeytte Tafel* – the original and the reproduction.¹⁸⁸ What dealers understood by such terms or cared about we can only surmise. But eventually the rise in the proliferation of fakes gave rise to connoisseurship.

So we have come full circle. Pieter Bruegel supplied drawings in the style of Bosch in order that his publisher could dupe innocent customers with engravings. Jacob Savery signed his drawings Bruegel to increase their value, Bruegel worked alone and inevitably produced very little, leaving fewer than 40 works produced in the last 12 years of his life that ambitious collectors struggled to obtain making him the catalyst for copies that his heirs were happy to supply, together with pastiches and deliberate forgeries that others were untroubled to dispense. Felipe de Guevara had written about vast numbers of copies after Bosch in his *Commentarios de la Pintura* in 1560.¹⁸⁹ On 3 October 1575 a ban on fakes was enacted by the Antwerp magistrature.¹⁹⁰ Yet Pieter II may well have passed off his work as being his father’s after this date, not that this idea can be substantiated. We may nevertheless guess that in the early days the desire to eliminate misunderstanding met the drive towards ambiguity somewhere along the upward curve of prices, especially when a work could be advantageously marketed under a suitably vague name like Bruegel.

Customers could not get enough, collectors were comfortable, and patrons never tired of the ‘Brueghel Franchise’. What reassurance lies in a name. When restored, a *Winter Landscape with Bird Trap* acquired by Dr Delporte from the Galerie Louis Manteau in Brussels in 1925, was found to bear a signature and date, BRVEGEL·M·D·LXV. The restorer was Joseph Van der Veken (1872-1964) a known forger, but one that never ‘signed’ his work with a forged signature. Shown at the Royal Academy in London in 1927 it was claimed to be the lost original. Roger Fry wrote in praise of the picture in his review of the exhibition for the Burlington in March 1927, and then rejected it in his column in May. Letters to the *Times* ensued, scientific reports were published by *The Connoisseur* in 1928, and in July 1928, an article appeared in the *Sunday Times* by Frank Rutter, headlined ‘A Brueghel and the Experts, Art and Science’. Friedländer had accepted it in 1927, Glück accepted it in 1951. Then in 1954 an article written by Horace

Shipp appeared in *Apollo*: 'The original Winter Landscape with a Bird Trap by Pieter Bruegel' about the discovery of a second, supposedly earlier version, signed BRVEGEL·MD·LXIII, the year before Dr Delporte's. Grossmann supported the Delporte version in 1955, Stechow considered both versions original in 1970 as did Robert Genaille in 1981. By then, the Delporte version was in the KMSKB-MRBAB in Brussels as part of a bequest. Klaus Ertz, however, had expressed his reservations about the attribution of this version in 1998, and in 2008 attributed it to Jan Brueghel the Elder. Many still support its authenticity: Sellink in 2007, and Silver in 2011. Meanwhile in 2004, prior to its sale at Sotheby's, Peter van den Brink had examined the '1564' edition, and pronounced it a poor workshop copy with a false signature, a view endorsed by Currie and Allart in 2012.

Great art is always a mystery.¹⁹¹ Connoisseurship has been overgrown by a thicket of abstruse theories.¹⁹² But when we look at a picture we are not looking at a lab report.¹⁹³ Emotionally, it requires more effort than that. With Bosch and Bruegel for starters, we are forced to look inside ourselves. Science may well yet prove that the cut-down *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Ghent is not by Bosch – but there is still some truth to be found in it.¹⁹⁴ Notwithstanding dendrochronological tests, spectrographs, x-rays, under-drawings, overpainting, pentimenti, erasures, we are still left with perennial questions of attribution. As we strive to discover who did what, with whom, when, and where, authenticity, the bedrock against which new discoveries may be tested drives art historical science forward. With 15th century Netherlandish painting it boils down to connoisseurship, an unfashionable term these days, an art of human frailty that may be supplemented by science and history but is something that cannot be replaced. Like all forms of art, connoisseurship contrives its own logic to provide answers to questions about who did what, but ultimately it accepts doubt and ambiguity into the bargain. Why should we care? Commerce and scholarship aside, it matters because it makes us all look closer – something that can be hard to do, to see afresh what we think we already know in our mind's eyes, our 'third eye', as the greatest, or certainly the most familiar works of art can be the hardest on which to concentrate. All good mysteries beg to be solved, an incomplete narrative is unsatisfying, and without an end to the story, an artist's legacy is challenged.

In the land of the Old Masters, where the multimedia technician is increasingly king, whether digitally re-mastering or animating a work of art as if curators no longer have faith in the original's power to compel, such interventions make purists shudder at the mere thought of it, but love it or hate it, it is here to stay.¹⁹⁵ It can be illuminating, and it can be downright misleading.

Art historians have at times demonstrated a naive approach to science. But art remains elusive despite all that technology can throw at it. Dendrochronology only determines a date after which a painting must have been executed, not when it was actually painted. Infrared reflectography means we see through the painted surface, nothing more. What we see has still to be assessed, interpretations have still to be made, judgements are debateable, views on quality still imprecise. But if the stakes are high enough, scientific evidence will not beat the cherished beliefs of those holding out for a work's authenticity. Fraudsters prey on those expectations. There are always some people willing to be deceived, happy to be duped into believing something is what it patently is not,



and documents supporting authenticity often as dubious as the works themselves. Common sense may be abandoned by those who only see what they want to see.

Attributions do not last forever.¹⁹⁶ It was Chateaubriand who said that nothing looks as decrepit as when you restore it. *The Wine of St Martin's Day* has proved him wrong. The art has not changed, but its stature has. One day a neglected picture, the next it is in the Prado. Among the late work *The Wine of St Martin's Day* was found, in 2010, to be a late, dated, and signed canvas by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.¹⁹⁷ Featuring more than 100 peasant revellers clamouring for wine and vomiting at a harvest bacchanalia, the largest ever painting by Bruegel described as “a mountain of humanity driven by gluttony” had been assumed lost. Lost, but certainly painted by a Bruegel or a Brueghel, the only outstanding question had always been, which one? A less illustrious son had always previously been identified as responsible, but now “the application of the brushstroke with its deft, confident strokes, the manner of creating the folds of drapery, the touches of light on the faces and on some of the drinking vessels, some of the shadows and the choice of colours are all characteristic of Pieter Bruegel the Elder” according to Pilar Silva Maroto.¹⁹⁸ A pickpocket steals, men brawl, a mother gives a baby its first nip of alcohol, a drunk sprawls on the floor in his own vomit, Bruegel censures the customs of his times.



272 Pieter Bruegel the Elder *The Wine of St Martin's Day* Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

The picture is neither religious nor devotional, but it is critical of excess and expresses an ironic tension between the charity of St Martin and over-indulgence at the feast that bears his name, as well as illustrating the satires of Erasmus with regards feast days of saints in which gluttony was the first of the Capital Sins. It is firmly rooted in the reality of its time, a Reformation-era critique of peasant practice in a prelude to the winter carnival. *The Fall of Icarus* on the other hand, either version, has finally been shown not to be by Pieter Bruegel the elder, Pieter Brueghel the Younger, or any other member of the dynasty.¹⁹⁹

Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made Kant²⁰⁰

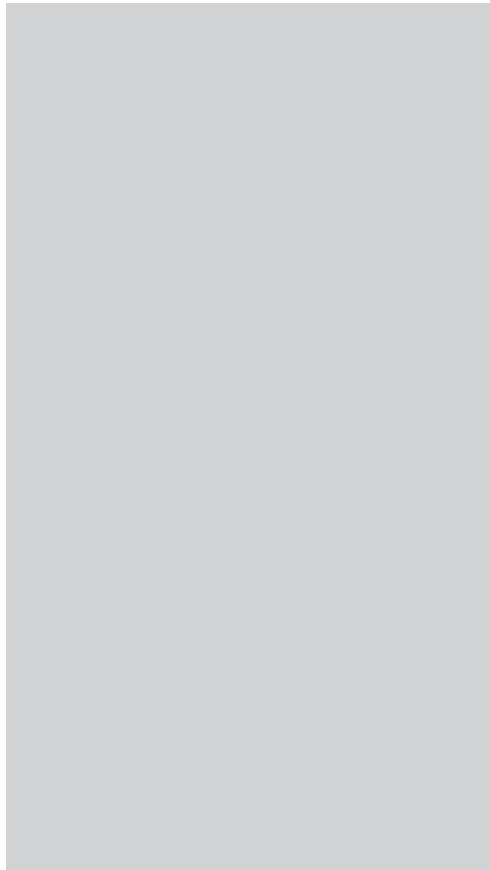
Postmodern fascination with fakes and third-rate copies suggests there is no authentic reality, just a series of imitations designed to gull us into believing in them. There were Han van Meegeren's Vermeers. There was Tom Keating who faked the "jolly little Brueghelesque figures" of Cornelius Kriehoff among others that included 'traps' to ensure his fakes, his "Sexton Blakes" as he liked to call them, were quickly exposed (only they were not) and then made television documentaries about the techniques of the Old Masters. The work of Eric Hebborn was authenticated by Sir John Pope-Hennessy as Corot, Mantegna, Tiepolo, Rubens, and Brueghel amongst others, before Eric admitted the fakes, only confusing the issue later by making fake confessions of fakes that never were, and then being found one morning in Rome, murdered. Elmyr de Hory or Elemér Albert Hoffmann, a man of multiple identities, a stash of passports, and a penchant for the greats of modern art whose work he copied but never signed, found, in Clifford Irving, a biographer who was himself a fraud. Wolfgang Beltracchi, convicted in 2011 of forging 14 paintings, later claimed to have forged hundreds of works by 50 artists. The struggling immigrant living in Queens, Pei-Shen Qian who, in an indictment was referred to elliptically as the 'Painter', mysteriously disappeared after his dealer was charged in 2013 with handling 63 of his drawings and paintings 'signed' by a variety of modern masters that had apparently fooled Knoedler among others.²⁰¹ Or Andrea del Sarto's version of Raphael's *Pope Leo X*, produced to order for the Medicis; Johann Winckelmann tricked into authenticating a Roman fresco, *Jupiter kissing Ganymede* concocted by Mengs; and lest we forget, Berenson authenticating work for a share of Duveen's profits – a purist scholar turned "greedy and ambitious" charlatan working for the "blithely ignorant".²⁰² So it goes on. Bosch and Bruegel were so popular it was perhaps inevitable that their work was copied, plagiarised and faked, by the bent twigs of the art world. Bent on forging a distinct vision they never produced enough to satisfy the market, so the market intervened to meet the demand in whatever way it could. The world of Bosch is a world that is obscured as well as revealed by our knowledge of what happened next.

The world as Bosch saw it was about to be wiped away. To look at his paintings is to retrieve from the partial glare of hindsight the world in which it erupted. He gives us a sense of what it was like to be alive at the end of the 15th century whilst being fully aware of the coming rip in history. It can be hard not to play the hindsight game. Knowing what happened next is a cheap pleasure. According to Goethe, "The conflict of faith and scepticism remains the proper, the only, the deepest theme of the history of the world and mankind to which all others are subordinate." With his world increasingly divided along religious lines, it should not surprise us the turn that Bruegel's work took, that religious issues exerted such a strong hold over his imagination. The Church remained a force, religion dictated people's lives, immense political power and influence accompanied its moral authority. By exploring their faith through their work a vision of the true nature of the society that shaped them emerges. For Bruegel, the struggle between individual conscience and both Church and state authority took on a very specific form, apparently colluding with the powers that be, only to subvert them. Some of the works are labyrinthine. The worst thing about a labyrinth is that there is no way out. These

have appeared to some people just like that. To paraphrase the film director Nicholas Roeg, “art opened the door of doubt to the collapse of difference between fiction and reality.” Bruegel must have been very sure of himself, even if he could not be sure about anyone else. We have to face the fact that the strength of these works is that they unveil private spaces, private lives, (their initial audiences as much as the artists) and hidden selves in a desolate, uncertain world.



273 Brussels,
Musées Royaux
des Beaux-Arts de
Belgique
The Fall of Icarus
not by Bruegel or
Brueghel



274 Viewing a
'new painting by
Pieter Bruegel'
in 2010

- 1 Painting dominates Proust. *In Search of Lost Time* has been celebrated for an obsession with everything from Norman architecture to optics, homosexuality, classical music, botany, tactical warfare, fin de siècle fashion and copper-pot cuisine, brain function and self-help. For example, Jonah Lehrer *Proust was a Neuroscientist*, and *How Proust Can Change Your Life* by Alain de Botton. This stunning variety of topics excludes art and memory, yet this is one of the most visual works in literature. At pivotal moments paintings play supporting roles as Proust uses them to amplify descriptions and evoke particular moods. A Parisian sky reminds an anxious Marcel of Mantegna; another sky is compared to Giotto's *Lamentation*; Françoise the housekeeper combs Les Halles for meat like Michelangelo carefully selecting marble at Carrara; Swann falls for Odette because she resembles a fresco by Botticelli. Elstir's artistic ideal was, according to Beckett, to represent 'what he sees, and not what he knows he ought to see'.
- 2 Simone Weil *La Pesanteur et la grâce* 1947 transl Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr as *Gravity and Grace* 1952 p37 "To see a landscape as it is when I am not there... When I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by breathing and the beating of my heart... I cannot conceive the necessity of God to love me... but I can easily imagine that he loves that perspective of creation, which can only be seen from the point where I am. But I act as a screen. I must withdraw so that he may see it." The minimalist American sculptor Roni Horn refers to this quote from Weil in order to make us look carefully at what she presents in her own work, and "to try to perceive the world without the filter of cultural preconceptions that may distort our vision" (from a Tate Gallery display caption September 2004)
- 3 The most detailed information on Patinir is the few sentences in Dürer's chronicle of his visit to the Low Countries in 1520-21. He writes about 'the good landscape painter'. Dürer also recorded that on 16 March 1521 he was given a painting by Patinir showing Lot and his daughters which may well be the *Landscape with the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* acquired by Göring and now in Rotterdam. Dendrochronology has suggested that the panel was probably painted in 1521 or shortly afterwards, lending evidence to the Dürer connection. Earlier artists incorporated landscapes into the background of their paintings, but Patinir was arguably the first (and certainly the first with international impact) to make it the focus of his pictures. Although his works are primarily landscapes, they all tell biblical stories. The style is instantly recognisable. The panoramas have high viewpoints; vast stretches of land are visible painted in brownish tones in the foreground, greens in the middle and blues in the distance. The buildings, trees, people and animals are depicted as if seen from eye level. The bizarre rock formations that appear in most of the works seem to have been inspired by formations along the Meuse near his birthplace, such as La Roche à Chandelle. In 1866 Weale suggested he trained in Bruges with Gerard David, in 1924 Winkler supposed he trained in the workshop of Jheronimus Bosch, or he could have learned his craft in Brussels which was the artistic centre nearest his home. Registered as a free master in 1515 around the age of 30-35, he must have worked as a workshop assistant for a longer period than usual, given that his date of birth has been accepted as around 1480-5. He was also entering a very competitive market when he did finally become a master; there were probably 100 workshops active in Antwerp by 1515.
- 4 William Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* Act V Scene III
- 5 Bill Viola *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House*, *Writings* 1973-1994 1995, p253
- 6 In the Middle Ages Ludolf 'the Carthusian' of Saxony in his *Vita Christi* revived the association made by early Christians of the image of the ship of the soul.
- 7 The Gospel According to St Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter ye at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"
- 8 Reindert Falkenburg *Joachim Patinir: Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life* 1988 pp77-82 claims that Charon as a symbol of death awaiting us at the end of life's journey was used in the first centuries of Christianity, and revived at the beginning of the 16th century by humanists, influenced by the Italian Renaissance.
- 9 *Charon Crossing the Styx* oil on panel 64x103cm Museo Nacional del Prado
- 10 Cerberus lurks by the entrance to a tower, guarding the line of Purgatory. According to medieval doctrine, the Particular Judgement took place immediately one died. The soul of the deceased was then taken directly to paradise or more usually to Purgatory to receive punishment for past sins while awaiting the Last Judgement after which the soul would ascend into Heaven or descend into Hell for evermore. The punishments administered in Purgatory and Hell were considered to be the same, unfortunately for us today looking at Patinir, despite his debt to Bosch, it is clear that he lacks his predecessor's creative fantasy for menace and demonology. We are confronted with pretty tame fare by comparison to Bosch. The demons that bedevilled his medieval predecessors' minds are hardly present in Patinir. However, the underlying drawing revealed by x-rays and infrared reflectograms shows a more balanced, and convincing presentation of the choice before the soul: the gigantic demon has gone and the false paradise confronts the apparently less appealing inlet to Heaven on an outwardly equal basis. The human dilemma of moral choice facing the soul would therefore originally have appeared even more difficult.
- 11 Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 p278 Charon's gazing out at us is compared to that of the Creator whose judgemental eye is being cast over the natural world, and may 'render the role' to the viewers for their own 'speculative insights' – a mirror of, and for, each human soul.
- 12 Antwerp Archief Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, Oud Archief *Liggeren de Sint-Lucasgilde* I1453-1616 no70(3) pub Rombouts and Van Lerijs 1864-76 p83
- 13 Stadsarchief Antwerpen *Schepenregisters* nr156 1519 VK2 fol407v. See Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1862 p284 n3, Michiels 1866 p402 n1
- 14 Felipe de Guevara 1570 *Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Madrid* prot165 fols101-8. Matilla Tascón 1988 pp258-61
- 15 Ludovico Guicciardini *Descrittione di tutti I Paesi Bassi* 1567 p98
- 16 Vasari *Vite* 1568/1906 p583
- 17 Dominicus Lampsonius *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris Effigies* 1572. See Michiels 1866 p403 and Koch 1968 pp5-6
- 18 Karel van Mander *Schilder-boeck* fol219r01-39 publ in Van Mander (1603-04) 1994-99 I pp134-7, 164-5, 168-71
- 19 Signatures offer clues as to provenance but no certainty as to authenticity. Patinir's inscriptions are OPUS JOACHIM D PATINIR (*Landscape with St Jerome*) opus IOACHIM D PATINIR (*Flight into Egypt*) OPVS IOACHIM D PATINIER (*Baptism of Christ*) IOACHIM D PATINIER (*St Jerome*) **vs IOA*HIM PA***IER (*Temptation of St Anthony*). The signatures are not generally regarded as autograph.
- 20 D for Dinant: Michiels 1866 p401. D for Dictus: Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1862 p283
- 21 WH James Weale 1866-70 p342
- 22 Friedrich Winkler *Die altniederländische Malerei. Die Maler in Belgien und Holland von 1400-1600* 1924 p215 an idea rather scotched by Walter Gibson "Mirror of the Earth": *The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting* 1989 pp6-7, 13-14
- 23 Friedländer listed 47 in 1931, then cut it to 13 in 1947 pp61-2. Koch selected 19 in 1968. In 1969 he added one more: *Landscape with the Meeting of St Anthony and St Paul in the Wilderness*. The Prado exhibited 29 in 2007 that it considered "part of the Patinir group: paintings made by Patinir himself, or in his workshop and under his control" Patinir 2007 p373. Of this 29, 12 were considered "core" including the five with 'signatures' ("what appear to be authentic signatures") and the rest "are more formulaic and lacklustre".

- 24 Six of the larger pieces out of the original 19 works listed by Koch: *Assumption of the Virgin*, *Triptych with the Penitence of St Jerome*, *Landscape with Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, *Temptation of St Anthony*, *Landscape with St Christopher*, and *Charon Crossing the River Styx* – very little of which can be proved.
- 25 Herry de Patinir, schilder was listed as a free master in Antwerp in 1535. He was a follower and the nephew of Joachim Patinir, Herri met de Bles, misidentified by Van Mander as Henri de Patinir, Joachim's son, and later Herri de Bles, schilder van Bovines by Dinant; Guicciardini called him Henrico da Dinant; Lampsonius as Henrico Blesio Bovinati Pictori. Van Mander's mistake influenced later writers who took up the idea, eg Joachim von Sandrart 1675, Filippo Baldinucci 1681, Isaac Bullart 1682. The distinction between the adjacent towns of Bouvignes in the region of Namur, and Dinant in Liège on either side of the River Meuse, only led to further confusion as Patinirs are recorded in both in the early 16th century. There was a merchant Henric le Patynier living in Bouvignes, a barber in Antwerp Jan Patenier, etc. Koch thought the issue of little importance 1968 p5.
- 26 The Netherlands *landscap* was used c1490, the Italian *paesi* was first used in the 1490s, Marcantonio Michiel had described *tavolette de paesi* in 1521 when referring to Netherlandish work in the collection of Cardinal Grimani, Francisco da Hollanda wrote of landscape c1548, *paysage* was considered a common French word by 1549, the word *landscap* was used in a report on some work from Mechelen 1552. "Der gut landschaftt Mabler" Reindert Falkenburg on variable meanings of landscape and how it differed from our understanding of the term *Arts international economy. Artists and markets. North-Central Europe* 2002 pp73-78
- 27 Jan van Eyck *St Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata* c1435-40 oil on panel 29x33cm Galleria Sabauda, Turin. (A very small version on parchment pasted onto a wooden panel taken from the same tree used for two other works by the artist is now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.)
- 28 *Landscape with the Temptation of St Anthony* c1520-24 oil on panel 155x173cm Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
- 29 Larry Silver *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* 2006 p26
- 30 Otto Pächt 'La terre de Flandres' *Pantheon* 36, 1978 pp3-16
- 31 Its form is reminiscent of 'the Madrid tabletop' by Bosch *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*
- 32 Klaudios Ptolemaios c100-170 *Geographia* or *Guide to Drawing a Map of the World*, was a companion to his earlier astronomical work *Almagest* and the astrological *Tetrabiblos*. The map book was based on a revision of the work of Marinus of Tyre, to which Ptolemy added a system of meridians, and devised three projections for mapping. But the bulk of the work was the listing of 8,000 places and natural features. The translation of Ptolemy into Latin by Renaissance scholars at the beginning of the 15th century brought his system for creating maps based on mathematical principles to a wide audience who nevertheless maintained the links to astronomy and astrology. Also in the second century, the Greek scientist Crates of Mallos was drawing the earth as a circle with four landmasses divided by an impassable ocean, something Christians found hard to accept as if each land was inhabited, how did Adam get across the seas? And how was the mission of the Apostles to convert the world feasible? By the ninth century Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* based in part on Cicero's *De Republica*, had put Crates' concept alongside his story and thus it became widely circulated throughout the Middle Ages as a basic text of medieval science. With their origins in ancient Egypt, diagrammatic maps were also in circulation showing a globe split into three zones by a T shape – the so-called TO maps, of which 0's is a fine, late example. East was almost always shown at the top. Asia was divided from Europe, bottom left, and Africa, bottom right, by the horizontal stroke that signified two great rivers; with Europe and Africa divided from each other by the vertical stroke representing the Mediterranean. This was adapted to Christian purposes with later additions such as the Earthly Paradise, Sinai and Jerusalem. Christian topography from the sixth century determined the earth was flat; ridiculing both Plato and Aristotle who believed the world was spherical. Maps illustrating the Apocalypse as described in Revelations had been compiled from the eighth century onwards by Spanish monks, originally by Beatus of Liebana in 776 and later in the northern monastery of San Domingo de Silos around 1106 after which copies were made for two hundred years. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi* from the 12th century emphasised the Last Judgement, whereas around 1290, the largest of the great medieval maps was created by the nuns of Ebstorf in Lower Saxony displaying the world as God's body. It is focused on salvation. By the 13th century Psalter world map, God is shown, flanked by two angels, blessing the world from outside the globe. The east with Adam and Eve are still at the top and Jerusalem has become the centre of the world.
- 33 The mapmakers' environment was one of subjective knowledge. Politics, patrons and religious beliefs competed with science in determining what a map looked like. Cartographers were storytellers, propagandists, imperialists, artists – as well as geographers.
- 34 Evelyn Edson *The World Map 1300-1492 The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation* 2007 p119. Magellan's 'mistake' was to accept Behaim's globe as an accurate reflection of distances, "a mistake of erroneous geography that would immortalize him for ever in world history" Jeremy Brotton *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* 2012 p194; Richard Hennig 'The Representation on Maps of the Magalhães Straits before their discovery' *image Mundi* 5 1948 pp32-7
- 35 Catherine Delano-Smith and Elizabeth Morley *Maps in Bibles* 1500-1600 1993 pxxv. In 1525 the Zurich printer Christopher Frooschauer, an associate of Zwingli, published an Old Testament based on Luther's translation, illustrated with the first map ever published in a Bible. It showed the Exodus from Egypt. Copies of the Etzlaub, Sebald Behaim, and Cranach maps, and Dürer's *Terrestrial Map of the Eastern Hemisphere* 1515 are held by the Houghton Library, Harvard University. A Sebald Behaim six-block woodcut visual/map of the *Siege of Vienna* is in the Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- 36 Joseph Koerner *Hieronymus Bosch: Enemy Painting* Association of Art Historians Conference/Glasgow School of Art Friday Event Lecture, 15 April 2010 Glasgow Cathedral, a reprise of Koerner's lecture to the Historians of Netherlandish Art in 's- Hertogenbosch 2007 *Jheronimus Bosch: Enemy Sources*, to the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence in 2007 *Bosch's Enmity* etc., etc.
- 37 See chapters 1 and 3 with reference to César Péman 'Sobre la interpretación del viandante al reverse del Carro de Heno de El Bosco' *Archivo Español de Arte* 1961 vol XXXIV pp125-139 and the *homo viator* – the Augustinian on his journey through life.
- 38 John Richardson *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* p75 writing about the late work of Paul Klee
- 39 Ivon Hitchens in a letter to Howard Bliss 7 November 1961 *Ivon Hitchens* Peter Khoroch 2007 p142
- 40 Carlo Levi *Christ Stopped at Eboli* 1945 transl Frances Frenaye 1947. 2000 p11
- 41 Something that "goes to the heart of one of our most powerful yearnings: the craving to find in nature a consolation for our mortality" was Simon Schama's explanation for the "explicit association between the evergreen fir and the architecture of resurrection" with reference to Caspar David Friedrich. *Landscape and Memory* 1996 p15
- 42 Fritz Grossman writes about Bruegel's possible contact with Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, and the "bird's-eye view" they both took in certain compositions, referring also to the map-like character of both artists explained by friendship "the geographer and designer of maps Abraham Ortelius" *Pieter Bruegel. Complete Editions of the Paintings* 1973 p14
- 43 The familiarity of the notion of Cockaigne across medieval and early modern Europe is relayed in the letters of Columbus, writing of food in abundance in the 'newfoundland'. "It is a veritable Cockaigne," he wrote, regretting only the lack of wine and the un-Christian customs of the natives. The elements of paradise he detected could be linked to dreams of Cockaigne. What the travellers saw and isolated as

worthy of note was frequently conditioned by their knowledge of the stock features of medieval conceptions of perfect worlds. This is why Columbus had so much to say about the food he found in the New World, and Magellan's travelling companion, Antonio Pigafetta, registered the age of the average Brazilian Indian - between 124 and 140 years, as these people clearly did not need a fountain of youth: their longevity reflecting the fact that they had retained much of the innocence of the ancient patriarchs of the book of Genesis. See Herman Pleij for examples of medieval fantasies of the perfect life *Dreaming of Cockaigne* 2001

- 44 *The Land of Cockaigne* 52x78cm oil on panel Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. The painting is a reprise of *The Harvesters*, the peace and quiet of which together with the sunlight, all radiate a certain inertia. The figure at the base of the tree is very similar. Another echo of *The Harvesters* is to be seen in the group resting at the base of the tree in an engraving from 1570 attributed to Pieter van der Heyden, *Summer*.
- 45 People in the 15th century were still being reminded of the siege of Jerusalem in AD70, in which mothers were forced to eat their own children after roasting them on a spit. This was after the city's supply of dogs, mice and rats had run out and there was no more shoe leather to be gnawed. Everyone feared starvation as we fear incurable disease.
- 46 Luilekkerland: a land of the lazy (lui) and gluttonous (lekker). See H Pleij 1997 for a study of the cultural background.
- 47 Rather than the alchemical or sexual symbolism some have tried to foist on it, eg Philippe & Françoise Robert-Jones Pieter Bruegel 2002 p238, or references to Spanish repression, that despite my natural inclination, I cannot detect, or in contrast to the theme of indulgence, "announcing the arrival of an open society" Pierre Francastel *Bruegel* 1995 p204
- 48 Ecclesiastes 2:24. Similar references are in Deuteronomy, Exodus. (Retirement never figures in scripture or in Bruegel, whereas today we live in an age that sees it as some eternal human right. It was a 20th century invention.)
- 49 *The Seven Deadly Sins* or *The Vices* 1556-8 series of seven preparatory drawings by Pieter Bruegel and seven engravings by Pieter van der Heyden published by Hieronymus Cock. *Wrath* pen and brown ink 1557 22.8x30.1cm Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence / *Wrath* engraving 1558 22.5x29.4cm. *Sloth* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 21.4x29.6cm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna / *Sloth* engraving 1558 23x29.1cm. *Pride* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 22.9x30cm Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris / *Pride* engraving 1558 22.9x29.6cm. *Avarice* pen and grey-brown ink 1556 22.8x29.8cm The British Museum, London / *Avarice* engraving 1558 22.5x29.6cm. *Gluttony* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 23x30cm Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris / *Gluttony* engraving 1558 22.5x29.4cm. *Envy* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 22x30cm Private collection, Switzerland / *Envy* engraving c1558 22.8x29.5cm. *Lust* pen and grey-brown ink 1557 22.5x29.6cm Prentenkabinet/cabinet des Estampes, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België/Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels / *Lust* engraving c1558 22.8x29.6cm.
- 50 Ronald Blyth *Divine Landscapes* 1986
- 51 For an illustration of the "polemic between a Northern school of painting and an Italian style" see Todd M Richardson *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* 2007 chapter 1 pp34-68
- 52 The only known commission is from one of Antwerp's finest, the wealthy, cultured, Nicolaes Jonghelinck.
- 53 Jane ten Brink Goldsmith 'Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Matter of Italy' *Sixteenth Century Journal* vol 23/2 Summer 1992 p230
- 54 *ibid* p234
- 55 The unfinished is always fascinating. Like a crack in the façade of art history, work in its raw state may be mysterious, can reveal process and intention, and even elicit a slight sense of voyeurism as we see something that we were never intended to see, apparently gaining access to the most private of private views, luring us along the road that perhaps leads to an appreciation of the artist's impulse. Yes, St Barbara is a knock-out, and yet Van Eyck seems to have decided that with her, less was more than enough. She is an object lesson in history as over the centuries since her appearance in Antwerp, painting has become less and less finished, the preparatory work less and less, brushwork progressively loosened, roughed up, and generally less exact.
- 56 Paul Valéry *Digression* in *Degas, Manet, Morisot* transl David Paul 1960 p57. "I know of no art which calls for the use of more intelligence than that of drawing. Whether it be a question of conjuring from the whole complex of what is seen, the one pencil stroke that is right, of summarizing a structure, of not letting one's hand wander, of deciphering and mentally formulating before putting down; or whether the moment be dominated by creation, the controlling idea growing richer and clearer with what it becomes on the paper and under one's eyes; every mental faculty finds its function in the task." (Italics in the original.)
- 57 There are 66 authenticated drawings by Bruegel, half of which were made specifically for prints. A further 26 engravings imply that at least that number of sheets existed, now presumed lost. At least 58 prints were made from his designs, only two of which were not printed at Hieronymus Cock's publishing house in Antwerp. *The New Hollstein. Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700. Pieter Bruegel the Elder* ed Nadine Orenstein and Manfred Sellink 2006 p.xxii and pp.xxiv-xxv. The corpus of the work we are aware of today is only a fragment of what must have been produced.
- 58 The largest number of surviving 15th century drawings attributed to an artist or his workshop is 2-300 credited to Pisanello, Antonio Pisano (before 1394-c1455) including drawings from life and pages of file drawings of stored images ready for adaption to fit new compositions. In contrast there are only two drawings connected to the workshop of Jan van Eyck, a *Portrait of Nicolò Albergati* c1435 21x18cm Kuperstichkabinet, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, and *Saint Barbara Seated Before the Tower* 1437 31x18cm Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. Rogier van der Weyden certainly used drawings but none survive. However, drawings following his paintings do survive (Micheline Sonkes 'Dessins du XV^e siècle: Groupe van der Weyden' *Les Primitifs Flamands III* contribution à l'étude des Primitifs Flamands 5, Brussels, Centre National de Recherches Primitifs Flamands 1969) and Lorne Campbell showed that Rogier's grandson, Goswijn, was still using the master's drawings in 1510 'Rogier van der Weyden and his Workshop' *Lectures and Memoirs: Proceedings of the British Academy* 84 Oxford 1994 p8. A preliminary composition study *Men Shoveling Chairs or 'Scupstoel'* c1445-50 Metropolitan, New York, is attributed to the 'Circle of Rogier van der Weyden'.
- 59 Larry Silver has written of 'lumpers' and 'splitters' with regards the oeuvre of Bosch *HNA Review of Books* November 2012. "Koreny is a serious splitter" he wrote, whilst in *Bosch* 2006 pp275-296 he himself appeared a 'lumper' with regards the drawings. In the first critical catalogue of the drawings by Bosch, Koreny with Bartz and Pokorný 2012, catalogued 61, of which just 11 are considered autograph, eight sheets as workshop, 24 sheets by followers, with nine sheets attributed to others, ie "the rejections are more conspicuous than the attributions" *Il sink Master Drawings* 2013 p400. In 2002-3 Koreny had accepted nine sheets as autograph with 15 drawings; De Tolnay listed 24 in 1937, and added five more in 1965; Friedländer accepted 18 in 1927; Baldass 16 in 1959; Unverfehrt 15 in 1980; whilst in 1967 Lemmens and Taverne arrived at just seven. As Marijnissen summarised the situation with regards recognising work by Bosch "the drawings merely serve to add to the problems" 2007 p454
- 60 Drawing is a design in some languages, but not in English.
- 61 Leon Battista Alberti *On Painting* 1435 Book II no.30
- 62 Vasari refers to *schizzi*, Leonardo to *abbozzo*, Baldinucci to *primo pensiero*, Pliny to *imperfectae tabulae* and his admiration for the "artist's actual thoughts" that could be seen in "their unfinished pictures", Goya to the need for "that quickness to observe and retentiveness of vision [as] the essential qualities of draughtsmen", and Baudelaire

- reprises a story attributed to Goya on the need to develop "the knack of making a sketch of a man who has thrown himself out of the window whilst he is falling from the fourth story to the ground, you will never be able to go in for the big stuff" in *The Life and Work of Eugène Delacroix* first published serially 1863. (Vasari collected drawings. *Il libro de' disegni* was his 'Book of Drawings' and at the end of his life in 1573 he painted a fresco at his home in Florence *The Invention of Drawing* that shows an artist capturing the line of his own shadow cast by a lamp, as he attempts to fix the boundary of an object, in this case his own image at the moment of invention.)
- 63 Michael Camille *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* 1992. T de Peyer Grillen and Grylli: the diableries of Hieronymus Bosch 2012
- 64 Francis Ames-Lewis 'Model-Books and Sketch-Books' section IV *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* 2000
- 65 Lillian Hellman at the start of her novel *Pentimento* called it "a way of seeing and then seeing again". In the century after Bruegel it became fashionable for some images to be printed that included their pentimenti, the errors and alterations being admired for themselves.
- 66 Martin Heidegger *What Is Called Thinking?* 1986 transl J Glenn Gray & F Wieck p16
- 67 Fritz Koreny 'Hieronymus Bosch: Überlegungen zu Stil und Chronologie' *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4/5 2004 pp47-75; Fritz Koreny *Hieronymus Bosch. Die Zeichnungen. Werkstatt und Nachfolge bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts* 2012 with Gabriele Bartz and Erwin Pokorny pp86-95. Before Koreny, Roger Van Schout found three styles of underdrawing 'Over de techniek van Jeroen Bosch' *Jheronimus Bosch; Bijdragen bij gelegenheid van de herdenkingstentoonstelling te 's-Hertogenbosch* 1967 pp72-79. This was followed by Jan Piet Filedt Kok who proposed classification of the underdrawings into two groups 'Underdrawing and drawing in the work of Hieronymus Bosch; a provisional survey in connection with the paintings by him in Rotterdam 1972-3' *Simiolus* 6 p133-162. Van Schoute with Carmen Garrido and Hélène Verougstraete detailed three types that were attributed to stylistic development 'Bosch and his Sphere. Technique' *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights into His Life and Work* Koldewey and Vermet (eds) 2001 pp102-119. The idea of 'development' was later given up in favour of the artist 'adapting his style to the circumstances of the day'. Koreny has pointed to the "sporadic critical voices, who pointed to significant stylistic differences" being ignored (starting with Gerd Unverfehrt *Hieronymus Bosch. Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* 1980 pp239-240) and what he considers an overemphasis on the cultural and historical background to the work at the expense of a "focus on the artistic work itself, its technical execution" that has "resulted [in] the situation that very diverse works are uncritically subsumed under Bosch's name". His conclusion is that five key works, "the hard core of Bosch's Oeuvres" – the *Garden*, the *Haywain*, the *Prado Epiphany*, the *Vienna Last Judgement*, and the Lisbon *St Antony* – "cannot be the work of one and the same painter". Thus "it emerges... that next to Bosch there was another painter active, who worked with similar motives" one who "worked independently alongside Bosch... but occasionally also together with him" means "about half of the paintings that are currently kept for authentic... are very probably not by him" but the unknown and unheralded "left-handed draughtsman" ignores or misrepresents what is known of workshop practice at the time. Fritz Koreny *Boschbuysen or Scheyfve? Observations on Hieronymus Bosch's Prado Epiphany* 2012. For an overall constructive criticism see Matthijs IJl sink 'Fritz Koreny et al., Hieronymus Bosch: Die Zeichnungen' transl Mark Broch in *Master Drawings* 51/3, 2013 pp393-407
- 68 *The Hell Ship* pen and ink 17.6x15.3cm Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna. *The Ship of Fools* brush, ink and white highlights on tinted paper 25.6x16.9cm Musée du Louvre, Paris. *Death of a Miser* brush, ink and white highlights on tinted paper 25.6x15cm Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- 69 Ron Spronk *All by himself?* 2011 p66
- 70 Rogier van der Weyden's *Crucifixion* in the Escorial was underdrawn by assistants but Rogier himself "executed all the important parts". Whereas his masterpiece *Descent from the Cross* in the Prado appears "to have been designed, underdrawn and painted by Rogier himself." *The Columba Triptych* in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, "was certainly designed by Rogier... it is equally certain that the underdrawing is by an assistant... and that Rogier himself executed only parts of the painting." Lorne Campbell 'The Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden' Rogier van der Weyden 1400-1464 *Master of Passions* 2009 p113 with reference to Van Asperen de Boer et al 1992 pp202-220, and De Vos 1999 pp276-284.
- 71 Jos Koldewey 'Hieronymus Bosch and his city' *Hieronymus Bosch. The Complete Paintings and Drawings* 2001 p69
- 72 Bernard Vermet 'Hieronymus Bosch: painter, workshop or style?' *Hieronymus Bosch* 2001 p98
- 73 Bruegel would have known and been inspired by work in the circles of Jan Wellens de Cock and Matthijs Cock in Antwerp as well as Patinir.
- 74 Frits Lugt 'Pieter Bruegel und Italien' *Festschrift für Max Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag* 1927 on Bruegel and Italian landscape art, and Hans Mielke *Pieter Bruegel: die Zeichnungen* 1996 on the journey to Italy.
- 75 *Italian Landscape/Landscape with Castle* (on reverse) pen and sepia ink 1554 33.3x46.6cm Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Continually in dispute as to who copied who and when. Combined with the *Landscape with St Jerome* pen and brown ink 1553 23.2x33.6cm National Gallery of Art, Washington; *Wooded Landscape with a Distant View Toward the Sea* pen and brown ink with brown wash, white body colour and black chalk on blue paper 1554 26x34.4cm The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard. Drawn on Venetian blue paper (the underdrawing resembles the Campagnola pastiche). *Cow Pasture before a Farmhouse or Pastoral Landscape with a Farm and a Windmill* pen and red-brown ink c1554 National Gallery of Art, Washington. All considered recognisably Venetian-inspired work. Matthijs IJl sink has called Bruegel "the traveller-artist as tourist" and how, coming "under the spell of Italy he starts to see and depict landscape like Campagnola and Titian" in much the same way "he draws and paints hellish scenes... [like] Bosch" seeing such "artistic dialogues" as a form of copying, which in this context is a dangerous word to use. Matthijs IJl sink *From Bosch to Bruegel: the disenchantment of the world* Lille talk 2013
- 76 *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* pen and brown and sepia ink 20.3x28.2cm Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Possibly 1553-54 from the supposedly Italian period, (cf a print published by Joris Hoefnagel based on a 1553 Bruegel drawing) or 1559-60, possibly by Savery, assuming that the signature is wrong - bruegel F only appearing without an 'h' after 1560.
- 77 *The Deposition* more commonly referred to as *The Entombment* pen and grey ink with grey wash over black chalk 25.3x30.5cm The British Museum, London. The attribution of this drawing varies from "superior quality" by De Tolnay 1966 p387 to rejected by Koreny 2003 and later attributed to the Master of the Prado Haywain 2012; "should be associated with the maturity of the artist" Silver 2006, and various other views that chime with the radically different numbers of drawings that are accepted as autograph by different scholars, between seven and 43 at the last count.
- 78 *Mountain Landscape with River and Travellers* pen and brown ink 1553 22.8x33.8cm The British Museum, London
- 79 Christopher Brown *Dutch Landscape: The Early Years* 1986
- 80 In a further 'contribution to history', in 2013 a film, *Tim's Vermeer* directed by Teller A Penn, thrust the roles of talent, training, and technique into the public domain with its exploration of an angled mirror taking the place of genius. But "optics do not make marks" as Hockney pointed out *Secret Knowledge* 2006 p14, and as Mariët Westermann had written a decade before, it was not a question of the artist using such tools, rather the extent to which he used them *The Art Bulletin* vol84/2, 2002 pp357-359
- 81 *The Large Landscapes* two preparatory drawings and 12 prints at least two of which are not after designs by Bruegel. *Mule Caravan on a Hillside* pen and brown ink 1555 29x43cm Musée du Louvre, Paris.

- Hilly Landscape with Three Pilgrims* pen and brown ink, brush and grey and brown ink c1555 26x41.5cm Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. The prints are all c1555-6 *Prospectus Tyburtinus (view of the Tiber, near Tivoli)* 32x42cm; *Hieronymus in Deserto (St Jerome in the Wilderness)* 32.7x42.9cm; *Magdalena Poenitens (The Penitent Magdalene)* 32.4x42.7cm; *Mule Caravan in a Mountain Landscape* sometimes referred to simply as *Alpine Landscape* and related to the Louvre drawing 32.5x42.9cm; *Insidiosus Auceps (The Crafty Bird Catcher)* 32.9x42.3cm; *Plaustrum Belgicum (The Belgian Wagon)* 32.4x42.8cm; *Sollicitudo Rustica (Rustic Cares)* 32.6x43.1cm; *Enntes in Emaus (The Way to Emmaus)* 32.6x42.9cm; *Pagus Nemorosus (Wooded Region)* 39.6x42.8cm; *Milites Requiescentes (Soldiers at Rest)* 32.2x42.1cm; *Nundinae Rusticorum (Country Market)* 32x42.4cm; *Fuga Deiparae in Aegyptum (The Rest on the Flight into Egypt)* 31.5x42.4cm. Sometimes related to this series is the *Large Alpine Landscape* c1555-6 36.8x46.8cm, a larger image without a narrative subject or a title. Charles de Tolnay put it later c1558 *The Drawings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, with a Critical Catalogue* 1952 p46.
- 82 The drawing of the same title was most likely created for a print in the *Large Landscapes* series but never executed.
- 83 Early proof sheets were made before Bruegel's name was added above that of the published Cock to increase sales.
- 84 *The Flight into Egypt* print relates more to the small *Landscapes* published later by Hieronymus Cock and wrongly attributed to Bruegel. It was probably entirely created by the van Doetecum brothers.
- 85 William W Robinson *The Age of Bruegel: Netherlandish Drawings in the Sixteenth Century* 1986 p253 National Gallery of Art, Washington, and The Pierpoint Morgan Library, Cambridge
- 86 Hans Mielke *Pieter Bruegel. Die Zeichnungen* pp74-80, Nadine Orenstein, Michiel C Plomp *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* 2001 p276 ed Nadine Orenstein
- 87 Emil K J Reznicek *Die Zeichnungen von Hendrick Goltzius* transl Maria Simon and Ingrid Jost 1961 pp108-110; Mielke 1996 p85
- 88 Jan Piet Filedt Kok and Marjolein Leesberg *The De Gheyn Family in The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700* 2000 pt1/p71 no215
- 89 *Landscape with a Mule Caravan on a Hillside* inscribed BRVEGHEL/1603 Munich Staatliche Graphische Sammlung
- 90 De-attribution came as a shock, and not without a fight. At various times, some of the sheets were attributed to Jheronimus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Bol, even Roelandt Savery, before they were seen as a coherent group of drawings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. First, in 1907 Georges Hulín de Loo and René van Bastelaer's selected some for their monograph on Bruegel. Then, perhaps in slavish commitment to Van Mander's comments that "Brueghel entertained himself observing the nature of the peasants" and "he drew many small views from life [*nae t'leven*]" others expected to see drawings like these and, despite their variations in quality and the lettering of the annotations that should all have raised questions in their minds, historians assigned more and more of them to the master. In 1952 De Tolnay p95, wrote that several scholars considered Savery the artist responsible, without being specific. Fritz Grossmann stoutly defended them, 1954 pp43-51. Then, on 13 April 1967, Frans van Leeuwen gave a lecture in Amsterdam citing the annotations as evidence of Savery's hand and not Bruegel's. His text was subsequently published in 1969, again in 1971 in *Simiolus* with, in the meantime, a revised version having appeared in *Oud-Holland*. Joaneath Spicer had arrived at a similar conclusion after studying the watermarks in the paper, the style of drawings, and their connection to Savery's paintings. Neither Van Leeuwen nor Spicer ever credited the other; both claimed to be first with their conclusions. In 1975 an exhibition could still appear with the drawings provocatively labeled 'probably by Roelandt Savery'. Without these 80 there are only three remaining sheets of peasant drawings (including *The Bagpipe Player*) attributed to Bruegel.
- 91 Max Friedländer *Die altniederländische Malerei* vol XIV trans Norden 1976 p41
- 92 Over 20 paintings bear the signature, probably only eight are today considered authentic.
- 93 Roger Marijnissen with Peter Ruyffelaere *Hieronymus Bosch* 2007 p16
- 94 Museums and auction houses regularly jump from one to the other in their attributions, whereas in reality there are only four known paintings signed by Huys and one by Mandijn. An interesting sidelight is to be found in Matthijs IJlsink and Jos Koldewij *La Montée au Calvaire d'après Jérôme Bosch* 2011 about a picture in the Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp that bears witness to the impact of the pictorial language of Bosch during the 16th century and refutes attribution to Jan Mandijn.
- 95 Jheronimus Bosch *Extraction of the Stone of Folly (The Cutting of the Stone)* oil on panel 48x35cm, and Jan Sanders van Hemessen *The Stonecutter (The Surgeon)* c1550-1555 oil on panel 100x141cm, both Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
- 96 *Hieronymus Cock. La Gravure à la Renaissance* exhibition at Institut Néerlandais, Paris 2013, catalogue Joris Van Grieken, Ger Luijten and Jan Van Der Stock Hieronymus Cock: The Renaissance in Print 2013
- 97 Christina Ceulemans foreword to *The Brueg[H]el Phenomenon* 2012 p14
- 98 The art market and the myth of the creative artist, who thus became the protected, and often docile, source of a valuable commodity, got into its stride only a century later with the compulsive generosity and accumulating fetishes of Renaissance studio-heads such as Farnese. Today, his breed has been replaced by the curators' fractious cabal, whose museums have a lingering odour of papal sanctity without the Roman ripeness, when rulers were judged not by their morals – but by their works. A contemporary of Bruegel, Alessandro Farnese was made a Cardinal by his grandfather Pope Paul III in 1534 at the age of 14. The papacy, like the Cosa Nostra, depended on family allegiances. Farnese was something of a Louis B Meyer figure. He liked to employ stars, and once he had them under contract, he combined flattery with intimidation, young painters who wanted to get into pictures were given predetermined assignments both in terms of 'story' and 'treatment' – something that might cause Michelangelo to walk away but kept contract artists eagerly occupied. Farnese looked to artists to put on the style, while artists relied on him for their upward mobility.
- 99 Pieter Brueghel, known as Pieter Brueghel the Younger, Pieter II and 'Helschen' or 'Hell Brueghel' (1564/5-1637/8); Jan I Brueghel, Jan Brueghel the Elder and 'Fluweelen' or 'Velvet Brueghel' (1568-1625). Pieter Bruegel also had one or two daughters: Maria, and possibly Catharina, although the latter may well have been the daughter of a Pieter van Bruegel, a surgeon living in Brussels. Pieter II was apprenticed to Gillis van Coninxloo the Younger (1544-1606), married Elizabeth Goddelet in 1588 and had seven children. Jan I visited Italy for seven years, lived most of his life in Antwerp, married twice, (Isabella de Jode, daughter of Gerard de Jode the dealer, and later Catherina van Marienburgh) and had several children including Jan the Younger or Jan II (1601-78), and Ambrosius (1617-75) both of whom became painters. Jan II inherited his father's workshop, worked in the style of his father, and married the daughter of the painter Abraham Janssens. Then the five sons of Jan Brueghel the Younger also became painters. Jan the Younger's half-sister, Anna, married David Teniers the Younger (1610-90). Another sister Paschasia, married Hieronymus Van Kessel and was the mother of the painter Jan Van Kessel the Elder (1626-79). Following the family tree is less than straightforward when we look at the signatures that appear on their paintings. Bruegel the Elder went from 'brueghel' to BRVEGHEL. In line with general practice I have adopted Bruegel throughout. Pieter II signed BRVEGHEL before changing to BREVGHEL. I have used the spelling he adopted in the first part of his career: Brueghel. (Klaus Ertz, however, opts for Breughel.) Jan I signed BRVEGHEL except for two copies of the *Triumph of Death* where he used the spelling adopted by his father. For 'new insights into a family network and its artistic consequences' (1551-1583) see Joost Vander Auwera 'The Brueghels in Brussels (1563-1583)' *Wallraf Richartz Jahrbuch* 2012.
- 100 Daughter of the artist and publisher Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550). Natasja Peeters Family *Matters: An Integrated Biography of Pieter*

Brueghel II in *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 77, 2008 pp45-74

- 101 There has been debate and doubt over who trained Pieter II. See Hessel Miedema 1994-1999 vol III p265, volV p75, and Marlier-Folie 1956 pp5-6. Gillis van Coninxloo the Younger (1544-1606) nephew of Anna van Dornicke, the first wife of Pieter Coecke was related to the Bruegel family by the marriage of Maria, the daughter of his uncle's second marriage to Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Gillis later married the widow of Pauwels Coecke who was the illegitimate son of Pieter Coecke and a half-brother of Maria Coecke. Philips Galle, as Dean of the Chamber of Rhetoric, a part of the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp, kept the accounts. Gillis is listed directly above *Peeter, syn cousin ende cnecht* in the period 26 September 1585-30 September 1586, and Pieter II was registered as a *vry-meestersson* in the Guild 1584-5, and his career as an independent master began around 18 October 1585 (the Feast of St Luke) when he was 21.
- 102 Larry Silver 'The Importance of Being Bruegel: The Posthumous Survival of the Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder' *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* 2001 p73. Silver's note 25 includes reference to 123 versions of the painting, 43 as autograph copies by Pieter the Younger, 52 doubtful and 28 unsigned, from the 1997 catalogue *Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere-Jan Brueghel der Ältere: Flämische Malerei um 1600, Tradition und Fortschritt* Klaus Ertz and Christa Nitze-Ertz (eds) et al, numbers 123-5
- 103 Nils Büttner in a review (transl Kristin Belkin) of Leopoldine Prosperetti *Landscape and Philosophy in the Art of Jan Brueghel the Elder* 2009 HNA Newsletter vol 27 no 1, April 2010 pp19-20 calls the artist "among the most underrated artists around 1600" and goes on to mention his "virtuoso, finely executed paintings in small format". I could not disagree more. It is the larger works such as the *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest measuring 64x40cm that is an undeniably fine piece of virtuoso observation, and worth a second look, even if it is not to my taste. Equally, his review of the book criticises "Prosperetti's basic thesis" relating the work of this artist to the culture that prevailed in Antwerp in his time, and his attempt to visualise the humanist belief in the inseparable nature of philosophy and rhetoric, seem well argued and long overdue.
- 104 Christina Currie and Dominique Allart *The Brueg[H]el Phenomenon* 2012 p28 "At the end of the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth, the most ambitious art collectors fought over the few paintings by the master that were still on the market."
- 105 Even Gombrich suggested that Renaissance painters abandoned mosaics because of the more expressive opportunities offered by paint, whereas the less elegant reason appears to have been that walls could be covered more quickly and at more competitive rates in fresco.
- 106 René van Bastelaer, Georges Hulin de Loo in 1907 concluded that the Younger's copies could provide clues as to the appearance of lost originals by the Elder; *Peter Bruegel l'Ancien, son Oeuvre et son Temps. Etude Historiques Suivie des Catalogues Raisonnés* 1907
- 107 His last descendent, François Perrenot still had a *Landscape with Flight into Egypt* in the family home outside Besançon in 1607.
- 108 Dominique Allart 'Did Pieter Brueghel the Younger see his Father's Paintings? Some Methodological and Critical Reflections' *Brueghel Enterprises* 2001-2 pp48-55
- 109 Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p267. Sellink suggests Galle engraved a series of six prints for Maarten van Heemskerck illustrating Petrarch's Trionfi from which Bruegel may have drawn inspiration or simply that the design was produced and "for one reason or another, was engraved and published posthumously".
- 110 Dominique Allart 'Did Pieter Brueghel the Younger see his Father's Paintings? Some Methodological and Critical Reflections' *Brueghel Enterprises* 2001-2 pp47-8. In a letter to Granvelle, 9 December 1572, Provost Morillon explains that "Il ne faut plus que vous estimiez recouvrer des pieces de Bruegel, sinon fort chèrement: car ells sont plus requisees depuis son trespas que par avant, et s'esment 50, 100 et 200 escus, qu'est charge de conscience." – 'they are even more sought after now than they were before his death, and are valued at 50, 100 and 200 escus, which puts a strain on one's conscience'.
- 111 Having become a master in Antwerp the *Liggeren* might mention assistants but it does not. The majority of the paintings we are aware of today emanate from his years in Brussels after 1563. Van Mander *Het Schilder-Boeck* 1604 fol233r ed Hessel Miedema 1994-1999 vol1 pp190-191. Practical jokes: Christina Currie and Dominique Allart *The Brueg[H]el Phenomenon* 2012 p40
- 113 *The Oracle: A Manual of the Art of Discretion* p121 (maxim 99) 1647 (transl L B Walton, London 1953)
- 114 The 'old style' Julian date of 22 April 1565 would become 2 May 1565 in the 'new style' Gregorian calendar. The change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar took place on 5 October 1582. Observance of the 'new style' was patchy but within ten years it was adhered to in most Catholic states. Many Protestant states did not effect Gregorian reform until the 18th century. The last states of the Dutch Republic made the changeover 1700-1. Feast days within the Orthodox Church still follow the Julian calendar. In 1565 an ordinance from Charles IX of France decreed that in future the year should begin on 1 January. To further complicate matters, Marijnsen *Bruegel. Tout l'Oeuvre Peint et Dessiné* 1988 p253 pointed out that Émile Biemont of Liège University, observed "the practice of beginning the calendar year on 1 January dates from 1 January 1576, [long after Bruegel's death] in accordance with the reform instituted by the King of Spain, Philip II. Before this reform two dating systems were used, according to which the year began either at Christmas or at Easter. The use of Easter became widespread during the 13th century."
- 115 Chronologically, it is arguable that Bruegel painted *The Adoration of the Kings*, now in the National Gallery, before painting *The Seasons*. Stylistically problematic, *The Adoration* marks a significant departure in Bruegel's work, it is the artist's only vertical format painting. It is composed almost entirely of large figures with very limited space around them, possibly derived from Italian Mannerism. Several characters appear uncomfortable. They display a wide range of emotion and reaction to the event. Some regard them as caricatures (Pinson and Müller). It is a dramatic image with the Kings treated in a grotesque way that to some extent echoes Bosch. If it has an Italian reference then it is clear Bruegel was uninterested in achieving an image of Italian beauty. Roberts-Jones commenting in *Pieter Bruegel* p128 says "Bruegel's faith must have been deep and sincere" – a comment with which we agree, and that the picture's "religious feeling is unmistakable" which we do not. *The Death of the Virgin*, the grisaille panel (the first of only three Bruegel definitively painted), was also painted around 1564 probably for his friend Abraham Ortelius (who had it engraved by Philips Galle ten years later) and, according to Grossman, possibly inspired by Jacobus de Voragine's 13th century *Golden Legend* (see *The Paintings* p196). Popham suggests it was painted later, see 'Pieter Bruegel and Abraham Ortelius' *Burlington Magazine* LIX October 1931 pp184-88. Astoundingly atmospheric, this emotional picture of a conventional deathbed scene is unorthodox to the point of being revolutionary. Christ's mother lies on her deathbed in a pool of light in a dark and tomb-like room in defiance of Catholic belief in the Virgin's Assumption into Heaven, an idea only infallibly defined as dogma by Pius XII in 1950. (Chapter 12 of *The Apocalypse* of St John refers to "A woman clothed with sun" that is taken to be the Church of God and may also, by allusion, be applied to Our Lady. The Church is clothed with the sun, ie Christ; she has the moon under her feet, ie the changeable things of the world; and twelve stars with which she is crowned, ie the apostles, etc., etc. If the Immaculate Conception disturbed the tranquillity of Catholic theology beyond the lifetime of Bruegel, the absence of any burial, tomb or relics fuelled the doctrine of the Assumption. Marian devotion was not simply an abstract thing. It satisfied a real need, an idea helped along in the Middle Ages by a 12th century manuscript best-seller relating the visions of Elizabeth of Schönau.) Bruegel surrounds Mary with a bizarre and elusive crowd of unidentified people, dramatically illuminated by very strong light coming from the Virgin, a small fire and three lamps. With *The Adoration of the Kings* and *The Death of the Virgin* it is as if the artist was trying new ideas, and new approaches to traditional subjects, in a short transitional phase of work before

embarking on the large-scale decorative scheme that would be completed within a year, *The Seasons*.

- 116 Calendar illustrations found in book illuminations and later panel paintings consisted of 12 images with the motifs of work and rural activities. A four part presentation of seasonal activity was also common but a six-part variation emerged that differentiated early spring, spring, early summer, high summer, autumn and winter. Confusion over the Bruegels resulted from a lack of clarity over their definition, designation and arrangement. Months, pairs of months, or seasons led to endless futile conjecture. Twelve or six? What has been lost? To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, 'to lose one painting may be regarded as a misfortune. To lose seven looks like carelessness.' De Tolnay was one of the first to suggest six panels in 1934 and whilst most commentators now agree with him, a significant number do not. Grossman in 1955 reverted to the 12 panel idea observing that "In all calendar illustrations the series begin with January, even where the official year began at Easter". In 1949 Held noted that Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, who owned paintings by Bruegel, ordered a series of six tapestries rendering the 12 months from the designs of his court painter. However, representations of work within a calendar framework by, for example Simon Bening (1483- 1561), demonstrate some flexibility. Bruegel took advantage of this. Marijnissen's analysis in favour of six panels was reinforced with the discovery of a drawing by Peeter Stevens that has been taken to having been inspired by *Gloomy Day* or *Early Spring* inscribed 'februarius' and 'mert'. With regards order, *Winter* has usually been placed first, whereas the official year began in early Spring. In 1564 Easter fell on 2 April in the Julian calendar.
- 117 Todd Richardson noted in his doctoral thesis *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* 2007 p71 that "Goldstein and Iain Buchanan have argued that Bruegel's *Series of the Seasons* hung in Jonghelinck's dining room, based on their subject matter which relates to the production and consumption of food. Goldstein extends this argument by correlating the paintings with suggestions for suburban dining room decorations put forward by Vitruvius and Alberti." See Goldstein *Keeping up Appearances* 2003 p48. Richardson also mentions in a footnote that Jeffrey M Muller *Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands* 1993 p199 writes of the "decorum of subject that called for agreement between the function of a particular room and the kind of pictures that hung in it" and quotes Sir Henry Wotton "that cheerful Paintings in the Feasting and Banqueting Rooms; Grauer Stories in Galleries, Land-ships and Boscage, and such Wilde workes in open Tarraces, or in Summer houses (as we call them) and the like". For the emergence, functions and material culture of dinner parties in Antwerp in the mid 16th century, together with some of the intersections between painting and history in a society that "used its belongings... as a means of constructing identity [observed] through the lens of the dinner party" see Claudia Goldstein *Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party* 2013. Goldstein takes as her starting point the bankruptcy of Jan Noiret on 25 August 1572 and the forced sale of his collection of over 50 paintings as he went from Mint Master to "a 'fugitive' in the eyes of the city" of Antwerp. Four of his remaining five Bruegel paintings (the most valuable part of the collection) had been displayed in the *eetkamerken* (small dining room). Through the cultural nexus of the dining room Goldstein builds on the work of Sullivan in 1994 and Richardson to discuss the *convivium* tradition as part of the 'performance art' and 'audience participation' of social gatherings, including *tafelspelen* – plays 'performed' at the table with their paintings becoming "part of the performance". Intriguingly, she emphasises that wealthy and well-connected collectors such as Nicolaes Jonghelinck, Joris Veselaer and Noiret were not as educated or as curious of humanist pursuits as some of their contemporaries or Bruegel's own friends, and hence their dinners were more social than intellectual, thereby agreeing with Walter Gibson's assessment in *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* "as men of the world, Bruegel's known patrons were undoubtedly less concerned with the sort of philosophic life associated by Sullivan with Ortelius and his humanist circle than with the luxurious display of their wealth and social standing, in which the artist's paintings would have played an important role" 2006 p76.
- 118 The dimensions of that room, suggested by Rutger Tijs hypothetical reconstruction, were 40 x 20-22 x 15 *Antwerpse voet* – 'Antwerp feet', that he translates as 11.47 x 5.74 x 4.3 metres. Tijs worked from the history of construction of similar country houses in the neighbourhood, a land division plan of 1546 by Gilbert van Schoonbeke, a map c1630 by Nicolaes Janszoon Visscher that shows the house, and a land register map by CJ van Lyere of 1698 that "provides us with a picture of what remained of the original layout... around that time". Rutger Tijs 'De twaalfmaandencyclus over het landleven van Pieter Bruegel als interieurdecoratie voor het huis van playsantie 'Ter Beken' te Antwerpen' *Brabom. Berichten en Rapporten over het Antwerps Bodemonderzoek en Monumentenzorg* part 3, 1999 pp117-132. I was subsequently in contact with Rutger Tijs, Jan Walgraave, a historian and retired Director of Antwerp Province Museums, Inge Schoups the current city archivist in Antwerp, Marie Juliette Marinus at Stad Antwerpen, Dr Jan Muylle at the University of Ghent, Katrien Vandermarliere director of the Vlaams Architectuur Instituut (VAi), Bob Van Reeth architect, Johan Valcke director of Design Flanders, Krysia Sobieski at the Centre de documentation Saint-Luc, the late Guy Schockaert, Jan van Rijswijklaan, and Jan Van Broeckhoven who knows the cultural scene in Antwerp as well as anyone, all in an attempt to visualize the room in which the *Months* were hung. The idea is my own.
- 119 This raises the further question of the order in which they might be hung and how they would relate to the room setting. We should not dismiss an alternative layout with all the pictures on one end wall, three above three, but it seems unlikely for this series. Assuming a series of six paintings, we also consider their value, importance and content, as all factors mitigating against them being hung in two banks on a long wall as Tijs illustrates, ie mixing the *Months* with something else. Unless there were 12 paintings in the series, something Tijs considers but we reject.
- 120 Both by Bruegel's contemporary, his 'classicising rival' the 'Flemish Raphael' Frans Floris de Vriendt (1519/20-1570) *The Labours of Hercules* and *The Seven Liberal Arts* referred to by van Mander who regards him as more competent than his Italian competitors with an implicit criticism of Michelangelo. There was also work by Gillis van Coninxloo, and Jonghelinck's brother, the sculptor Jacques's series of the *Seven Planets*.
- 121 Fritz Novotny stresses the lack of naturalism and called them *Mischlandschaften*, composite landscapes, as they were not painted from nature but were in part inventions, and partly inspired by previously made studies *Die Monatsbilder Pieter Bruegels* 1948 pp1-41, which raises the question if these are composites, why should any of the other works be anything but?
- 122 Reindert Falkenburg 'Pieter Bruegel's Series of the Seasons on the Perception of Divine Order' *Liber Amicorum Raphael De Smedt* J Vander Auwera (ed) et al 2001 p262. Also note Larry Silver Bruegel 2011 p434 "Religious conduct is otherwise easily overlooked... and must be sought out by the viewer amid ordinary activities and locations."
- 123 He reserved the compensatory pleasures of village life for the later *Wedding Dance*, *Peasant Wedding* or *Wedding Banquet* and the *Village Kermis* or *Peasants' Dance* painted between 1566 and 1569.
- 124 David Teniers "which represent the diversity of the twelve Months of the year" see Klaus Demus *Bruegel* 1981 p87
- 125 Robert Genaille *Bruegel l'Ancien* 1953 p93
- 126 Klaus Demus *Pieter Bruegel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna* 1998 p86
- 127 *ibid* p84
- 128 Spring was originally a much brighter painting.
- 129 *Haymaking* or *Early Summer* 114x158cm (117x161), *The Harvest* or *Summer* was 116.5x159.5cm and with strips added at top, bottom, and right is 119x162cm, *Return of the Herd* or *Autumn* 117x159cm, *Hunters in the Snow* or *The Return of the Hunters* or *Winter* 117x162cm, *Gloomy Day* or *Early Spring* 118x163cm. The titles are the ones generally used and are not particularly good. *The Procession to Calvary* measures 124x170cm.
- 130 Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p202 "However, the problem with this

- line of enquiry is that we know very little about Bruegel and nothing at all about his religious beliefs or cosmology. His landscapes have been analysed in the light of Renaissance humanist thought, with reference to the theological and humanist literature of northern Europe and the predominantly pastoral traditions of Italian and classical literature, with surprisingly different outcomes.” Sellink refers to Gibson and Demus, and then to the religious analyses of Falkenburg and Bakker.
- 131 March 1564.
- 132 A rhymed chronicle of 1565 says: “Soon after Easter early in May / the whole people began to complain bitterly / The poor were in dire need / The only thing they talked about was that the seed had not sprouted / Many were afraid of bad times and cried Alas / we shall have to spend all we have.” When he brought home the stolen bread, Till Eulenspiegel told his mother “Eat now while you have something to eat. You can fast when there’s nothing left.” A year after Bruegel’s death *Eulenspiegel* was placed on the Index.
- 133 On top of which, Pieter and Mayken Bruegel’s first son was born 1564/5.
- 134 See Chapter 5, section 1.
- 135 *Bulletin de la Commission royale d’Histoire* XIII 1847 pp85-147 quoted by Glück *The Large Bruegel Book* 1952 pp70-71 and Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p47 “On the fifth, when the gentlemen of Antwerp presented His Highness six paintings representing the twelve months and eight tapestries, I gave the usher eight taler.” (Van Wijk had also sold Ernst *Children’s Games* see Buchanan 1990 p542 and n11.) In addition the Governor owned a *Peasant Wedding* bought in July 1594, see Allart 2006 p245, a *Conversion of St Paul* listed in the 1595 inventory, and a *Crucifixion* see Allart 2001 pp46-7.
- 136 M de Maeyer *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst* 1955 pp53 and 455-56 “elck schilderij twee maenden met hunne figuren”
- 137 See Chapter 6, section 4.
- 138 The quest for identity has focused on the themes in the work as Annette de Vries pointed out in her research and “the reception of Bruegel’s art has without doubt enhanced our view of how his art probably functioned in his time. Above all it has made us aware of the multilateral character of the interplay between the artist, his art and his audience.” I agree. See de Vries’ 2008 Groningen lecture published in *Understanding Art in Antwerp* and her article in *Cultural Mediators. Artists and writers at the crossroads of tradition, innovation and reception in the Low Countries and Italy 1450-1650*
- 139 See the conclusion to Chapter 6 – The World According to Bruegel
- 140 For the visual metaphor of the mills, inspired by John 6:51-2 “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world” see JS Pierce ‘Memling’s Mills’ *Studies in Medieval Culture* vol 2 JR Sommerfeldt (ed) 1966 pp111-19. The windmill is high on a rock – “and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” Gospel According to St Matthew 16:18. Just what the child signifies, hovering at the door, pushing at the rock, is a topic for debate.
- 141 Walter S Gibson ‘Bosch’s Boy with a whirligig: some iconographical speculations’ *Simiolus* vol 8/1 1975/6 p12. Nils Büttner *Die Erfindung der Landschaft; Kosmographie und Landschaftskunst im Zeitalter Bruegels* 2000 considers the emergence in Antwerp of cosmography and geography as scientific disciplines in the 16th century and their representation in art.
- 142 Charles de Tolnay quotes Erasmus In Praise of Folly: “In sum, you might look down from the moon, as Menippus did of old, upon the numberless agitations among mortal men, you would think you were seeing a swarm of flies or gnats, quarrelling among themselves, waging wars, setting snares for each other, robbing, sporting, wantoning, being born, growing old, and dying. And one can scarce believe what commotions and what tragedies this animalcule, little as he is and so soon to perish, sets a-going.” Huizinga also noted the parallel, see *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* 1957 p114.
- 143 ‘Smelting...’ Patrick Kavanagh *After Forty Years of Age from Collected Poems* 1964 p148. According to Seamus Heaney, the poet himself said that ‘poetry was a mystical thing’ alerting us to what Heaney saw as Kavanagh’s personal conviction behind the writing as ‘a hole in heaven’s gable.’ Fr Daniel O’Leary has spoken of Kavanagh’s ‘sacramentalising imagination’ a phrase that would seem appropriate for Bruegel.
- 144 “Thus we sail towards your cathedral / Here and there floats a rosary of haystacks” is a phrase of Charles Péguy, the French poet who died in preliminary skirmishing before the Battle of the Marne in September 1914.
- 145 Edwin Parker Twombly Jr was born in Lexington, Virginia in 1928, Cy was his father’s nickname. Cyclone Young was a contemporary baseball pitcher. Cy Twombly died in July 2011.
- 146 Tom Lubbock said that the catalogue for his London exhibition in 2008 took cultural name-dropping to the level of carpet-bombing.
- 147 Ben Lewis ‘Twombly free’ *Evening Standard* 20 June 2008. Elsewhere, other critics have compared him to Miro and Monet and Motherwell; to Titian, Tiepolo and Turner, even Jacques-Louis David and Nicolas Poussin, the comparisons are endless. Close to Heaven indeed. It used to be a popular line with journalists, eg everything Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko produced were widely assumed “to contain the seeds of Infinity and the rudiments of Paradise”. See Robert Hughes *Nothing if not Critical* p240
- 148 David Sylvester *About Modern Art* p372
- 149 James Joyce *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* quotes Ovid’s Metamorphoses ‘Et ignotas animus dimittit in arts’ (And he sets his mind to unknown arts) – with its fusion of myth and modernism, allusions to Daedalus and Icarus, echoes of Dante, references to Aquinas, and the role of the Church, together with its style capturing subjective experience, it seems (taken with Joyce’s later experimental use of language) a suitably parallel reference for Twombly.
- 150 In 1955, Frank O’Hara wrote “A bird seems to have passed through the impasto with cream-coloured screams and bitter claw marks”, quoted by Brooke Adams ‘Expatriate Dreams’ *Art in America* February 1995
- 151 Twombly entered the US Army in 1954 and trained as a cryptographer.
- 152 Not stripped away. They are multilayered, overpainted and overpainted again and again, taking weeks to complete.
- 153 Ben Lewis ‘Twombly free’ *Evening Standard* 20 June 2008.
- 154 His pictures have titles like Luxor, Lepanto and Leda.
- 155 Serota says that Twombly “evokes rather than describes”.
- 156 For example, *Estate*, the second of his seasons, has references to the Greek George Sefaris and the Latin Catullus. Elsewhere there is Rilke, Robbe-Grillet, Pessoa and Mallarmé. It was all a “trifle historicist, a bit too stylish” as Robert Hughes wrote of Robert Motherwell *Nothing if not Critical* p291
- 157 The two series were not seen together until 2008 at Tate Modern. The New York Museum of Modern Art collection were painted 1993-4, they are all synthetic polymer paint, oil, house paint, pencil and crayon on canvas: *Spring* 312.5x190cm, *Summer* 314.5x201cm, *Autumn* 313.7x189.9cm, *Winter* 313x190.1cm. The collection in Tate London were painted 1993-5, and consist of *Primavera* acrylic paint, oil paint, crayon and graphite on canvas 313.2x189.5cm, *Estate* acrylic paint and graphite on canvas 314.1x215.2cm, *Autunno* acrylic paint, oil paint, crayon and graphite on canvas 313.6x215cm, *Inverno* acrylic paint, oil paint, crayon and graphite on canvas 313.5x221cm.
- 158 Tom Lubbock *The Independent* 23 June 2008

- 159 The vermilion "blood-and-wine" *Untitled V (Bacchus)*, VII and VIII from 2005
- 160 The late work has been written of in conjunction with Beethoven's late quartets and the Vier letzte lieder, the Four Last Songs of Richard Strauss. (These are the comparisons Twombly draws from critics.) I prefer the end of TS Eliot's *Four Quartets* – "All manner of things shall be well/When the tongues of flames are infolded/Into the crowned know of fire/And the fire and the rose are one". Twombly's last exhibited work was a monumental quintet of canvases, *The Roses*.
- 161 Twombly in conversation with Serota, 2008
- 162 Adrian Searle 'His Scattered Dreams' *Guardian* 17 June 2008. "Palimpsest" is Brooke Adams term for it as well.
- 163 Robert Coover *Pricksongs & Descants* 1969
- 164 *The Triumph of Death* oil on canvas 119x164cm Landesmuseum, Graz
- 165 *Sermon of St John the Baptist* oil on panel 95x160.5cm Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest: "scores of copies were made in the studios of Bruegel's sons in Antwerp at the very height of the Counter-Reformation: this could never have been the case if the work were considered an explicit Protestant manifesto." Manfred Sellink *Bruegel* 2007 p233
- 166 The portrait of the Elder attributed to Johannes Wierix and the virtually identical image attributed to Philips Galle
- 167 J B Bedaux and A Van Gool 'Bruegel's birthyear, motive of an ars/natura transmutation' *Simiolus* 7/3 1974 pp133-156 for the full story, reconstruction, and meaning of the text, that involved reading the text vertically in columns to be fully understood.
- 168 The words on the plaque come from Marijnissen 1988 p12; the Rubens painting that once hung besides the tomb *Delivery of the Keys to St Peter* is now in the Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
- 169 Klaus Ertz 1998-2000 pp373-379, pp501-522, pp605-630
- 170 F Vermeylen *Painting for the Market. Commercialisation of Art in Antwerp's Golden Age. Studies in European Urban History (1100- 1800)* 2003 pp46-61, pp116-118
- 171 By 1616 there were 216 painters registered in the city, twice as many as in 1584, but still less than a third of the number in 1579. See chapter 2, and Elizabeth Honig *Painting and the Market in early Modern Antwerp* 1999 p110
- 172 *Massacre of the Innocents* Pieter Brueghel the Younger, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, signed P.BRUEGHEL using the spelling his father did before 1559, but the style (capitals) he later adopted. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lons-le-Saunier
- 173 AKL Thijs 'Antwerp's Luxury Industries: The Pursuit of Profit and Artistic Sensibilities' *Antwerp: Story of a Metropolis, 16th-17th century* J Van der Stock (ed) 1993 pp105-111. For *cunstervercopere* (painting dealers) ibid Honig p110; ZZ Filipczak *Picturing Art in Antwerp 1550-1700* 1987 pp50-53, F Vermeylen *Exporting Art Across the Globe. The Antwerp Art Market in the Sixteenth Century* 1999 pp12-29; C Van de Velde 'Painters and Patrons in Antwerp in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' *Concept, Design & Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1799)* H Vlieghe (ed); A Balis, C Van de Velde (eds) 2000 pp29-44. For the new dealers, ibid Honig 111-112; K Van der Stichelen and F Vermeylen 'The Antwerp Guild of St Luke and the Marketing of Paintings, 1400- 1700' *Mapping Markets for paintings in Europe 1450-1750* N de Marchi and H van Miegroet (eds) 2006 pp194-200; J Denucé *Art Export in the 17th Century in Antwerp. The Firm Forchoudt* 1931; N de Marchi and H van Miegroet *The Rise of the Dealer-Auctioneer in Paris: information and Transparency in a Market for Netherlandish Painting* 2008; for exports see Honig ibid pp110-114; Vermeylen 1999; N de Marchi and H van Miegroet 'Exploring Markets for Netherlandish Paintings in Spain and Nueva España' *Kunst voor the Market. Art for the Market. 1500-1700* R Falkenburg, D de Jong, D Meijers, B Ramakers and M Westermann (eds) 1999 pp80-111; D Lyna, F Vermeylen, H Vlieghe *Art Auctions and Dealers* 2009 pp194-5; B Blondé 'Art and economy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Antwerp: a view from the demand side' *Economia e Arte Secc. XIII-XVIII* 2002 pp379-391
- 174 Willem van Haecht *The Art Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* 1628 Rubenshuis, Antwerp
- 175 JRJ van Asperen de Boer et al *Jan van Eyck: Two Paintings of 'St Francis Receiving the Stigmata'* 1997 pp7, 11n10
- 176 Maryan W Ainsworth 'Implications of Revised Attributions in Netherlandish Painting' *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 27, 1992 p71
- 177 Rogier van der Weyden *Descent from the Cross* c1435 Museo del Prado, Madrid; after van der Weyden examples: *Descent from the Cross* late 15th century Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie; *Nicodemus in Prayer* and *Joseph of Arimathea in Prayer* Tatton Park, the Egerton Collection; a *Holy Woman* Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels; a *St Luke Drawing the Virgin* Christie's sale New York 6 April 2006, no18, where the original features of Joseph of Arimathea have been transferred to St Luke in a different narrative context.
- 178 His workshop included several anonymous artists such as the Master of the Prado Adoration, the Master of the Prado Redemption (possibly Vrancke van der Stockt), the Master of the Legend of St Catherine (sometimes thought to be Pieter van der Weyden) working alongside three or four journeymen. See Lorne Campbell 'The Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden' *Rogier van der Weyden 1400-1464 Master of Passions* Campbell, Van der Stock (eds) 2009 pp104-129
- 179 Hélène Mund 'Rogier van der Weyden in context' *Rogier van der Weyden 1400-1464 Master of Passions* Campbell, Van der Stock (eds) 2009 p190. Mund goes on to give the example of a dispute in 1519 between Gerard David and his collaborator Ambrosius Benson that resulted in David's imprisonment. See G Marlier *Ambroise Benson et la peinture à Bruges au temps de Charles-Quint* 1957 pp15-19, 41-42
- 180 K Van der Stichelen 'Productivité et collaboration dans les milieus artistiques anversoires de 1620 à 1640' *Crédit communal. Bulletin trimestriel* 172, 1990 pp5-15
- 181 Chrysostomus van Immerseel placed an order with Adriaen van Stalbempt in 1635 for 75 paintings for which he paid on average 10 florins per original and three florins per copy, for the Spanish market. Elizabeth Honig 1998 p113
- 182 Jan Brueghel the Younger kept a record from 1625 to 1651 of paintings, prices and destinations. M Vaes 'Le Journal de Jean Brueghel II' *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 6, 1926 pp163-222. Jan's record is also witness to workers employed on an hourly and daily basis, the practical logistics of production, and general workshop practices.
- 183 Christina Currie and Dominique Allart *The Brueg[el] Phenomenon* 2012 p62
- 184 Honig 1998 pp177-189, K Van der Stichelen 1990. Some of 'the stars': Rubens employed Frans Snyders, Jacob Jordaens, Theodoor van Thulden, Jacob Gowy, Jan Wildens, and Jan Baptist Borrekens, as well as working with Jan Brueghel the Elder, who in turn worked with Peter Van Avont, Hendrick van Balen, Hendrick de Clerck, Frans Francken the Younger, Joos de Momper the Younger, and Tobias Verhaecht. Gerard David worked with Jan Gossaert, Joachim Patinir with Quentin Matsys.
- 185 Pieter Breughel the Younger's letters to Ercole Bianchi 1608-9 and his diaries all record his making 'final touches', 'improving some copies', and explicit notes regards generally finishing off production. M Vaes 'Le Journal de Jean Brueghel II' *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 6, 1926 pp168, 187, 213
- 186 Never forgetting Oscar Wilde's quip from *The Critic as Artist* 1891 "Give a man a mask and he will show you his true face." Sometimes brands are more powerful than truth.
- 187 A Tummers "By His Hand": The Paradox of Seventeenth-Century Connoisseurship' 2008 pp31-66; A Tummers 'The painter versus

- the Connoisseur? The Best Judge of Pictures in Seventeenth-Century Theory and Practice' 2008 pp127-147 both *Art Market and Connoisseurship. A Closer Look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and their Contemporaries* A Tummers, K Jonckheere (eds)
- 188 *Het Schilder-Boeck* 1604 fol200v. H Miedema (ed) *Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603-1604)* trans D Cook-Radmore 1994-99 vol1 pp60-61. Van Mander was writing about the *Adoration of the Lamb* by the Van Eycks and its copy by Michiel Coxcie
- 189 Larry Silver 'Second Bosch: Family Resemblance and the Marketing of Art' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 50, 1999 pp30- 56; H Verougstraete and R Van Schoute 'Copies, Pastiche, and Forgeries after Bosch' *Making and Marketing: Studies of the painting Process in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Workshops* M Faries (ed) 2006 pp143-154; P van den Brink 'The Art of Copying. Copying and Serial Production of Paintings in the Low Countries in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' *Brueghel Enterprises* 2001 pp36-39
- 190 ZZ Filipczak *Picturing Art in Antwerp 1550-1700* 1987 p44; Neil de Marchi & Hans J Van Miegroet 'Art, Value, and Market Practices in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century' *Art Bulletin* 86, 9/1994 p455; Carl Van de Velde 'Painters and Patrons in Antwerp in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' *Concept, Design & Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1799)* Hans Vlieghe, Arnout Balis, Carl Van de Velde (eds) 2000 p34; Christina Currie & Dominique Allart 2012 p71
- 191 Think of the mysterious figure of the Master of the Flémalle, the artist who at times has been linked to Rogier van der Weyden, Rogier van der Weyden the Younger (who did not exist), Robert Campin and Jacques Daret, in a fantastically confusing 15th century whodunit that appears inexhaustible in its ramifications, with the added twist that when the Städel Museum bought three paintings in 1849 from a collector in Aachen, they were told they came from the Abbey of Flémalle near Liège, hence the name given to the artist. Only there never was an abbey in Flémalle. Anonymous or not, the paintings attributed to both the Master of the Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden are some of the most consummate works of art ever produced. The beauty resides not just in the pictures – but in the doubts surrounding them. The fact that doubts remain over work that, like the works of Bosch, have become cornerstones of art history is both a conundrum and a healthy reminder of the perennial questions we try to unravel.
- 192 "Meadow closes his introduction with a methodological review in which he characterises his own enterprise as one of 'historical and comparative epistemology,' seating it third after the eras of connoisseurship and Panofskian iconography. Some readers may find this a reductive account of art history during the twentieth century. Yet Meadow seems to confuse the putative method for generating Bruegel's design – the notebook system – with the eventual service offered by the artwork itself: its potential for disclosing some unprecedented knowledge or awareness." Ethan Matt Kavalier reviewing Mark Meadow's book 'Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs and the Practice of Rhetoric' *Art Bulletin* September 2006. Kavalier's comment appears to deliberately ignore the highly focused scope of the work that Meadow himself set out to establish.
- 193 A view endorsed by Laurence Kanter, at one time a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and who, with the dealer Richard L. Feigen, organized an exhibition of 14th-17th century paintings at the Yale University Art Gallery in 2010. "Art history has been hijacked by other disciplines. Original works of art have been forgotten... No one wants to turn art history back 150 years. But we're lacking an important tool that we threw out of the window 70 years ago" he said. He went on "There isn't a single art history department in the world that I consider first class. I'm hoping Yale will develop a focus on objects instead of theories." His idea is simple: if he can spot a Fra Angelico by looking closely at something (and he has: *Visions of Lucy* c1427-9, bought at auction in 1998 for \$20,000 and now valued at c\$5 million) perhaps students may one day be able to tell gold from dross. Feigen is resolute in his unfashionable attitude: "I take an elitist attitude. I don't ask people what they want to see. I tell them what they ought to want to see." Kanter says, "It's a lesson in hard looking." Robert Storr, the dean of the Yale School of Art is sympathetic to the importance of being able to tell the real from the fake, but he has a caveat; "There's a conservative side to all this that I don't subscribe to. It takes us back to Clement Greenberg and the idea that some people have an eye that trumps all others." Pitting new technology against the traditional, a retired New York City detective and forensics specialist, Nicholas Petraco who holds a PhD in theoretical chemistry, approaches art as if it were a body at a crime scene: "I've had cases with less materials than this where people are spending 25 to 30 years in jail" was his comment in November 2013 after examining disputed works by Jackson Pollock, as he analysed microscopic analysis to support and refute the judgements of connoisseurs.
- 194 Is it cut down? Is it by Bosch? Considered in its present setting, across the room in Ghent (Museum voor Schone Kunsten) from *St Jerome at Prayer* oil on panel 80.1x60.6cm, it seems impossible that they are both from the hand of the same artist. It is difficult to even comprehend how it was ever attributed to Bosch in the first place. Comparing the dubious Ghent panel with another picture Ron Spronk, not unreasonably, poses the question, "Are the differences in painterly technique between Christ Mocked and Christ Carrying the Cross so great that an attribution to a single painter becomes untenable." *All by himself?* 2011 p55, and goes on to explain why such a conclusion would be "premature" as there are previously unseen similarities as well as differences that have been uncovered by technical investigation.
- 195 In the Benedictine refectory behind San Giorgio Maggiore, where the original hung from 1562 until Napoleon carted it off to Paris in 1797, Peter Greenaway took Veronese's characters out to play at *The Wedding at Cana*, in a marriage of Renaissance painting and advanced technology. This was the third in a series of 'Nine Classical Paintings Revisited' by Greenaway that has already taken in *Night Watch* at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the *Last Supper* in Milan at Santa Maria della Grazie. Purists may hate the idea. But. Call it Disneyfied kitsch, or a 'flamboyant denigration of site specific video' if you like, this was anything but mediocre. For 50 minutes in Venice, I was transfixed. Not knowing what to expect made it all the better. As the wine poured out, we felt as if we had gate-crashed the wedding. In 2009 it was the best hour I spent at the Biennale. More self-indulgent technical feats of video installation such as this to feast on – and I should be happy. When the full size (67.29sqm) digital recreation of *The Wedding* by Factum Arte of Madrid was installed in Venice it was dubbed "the third miracle of Cana" by Pierluigi Pana in *Corriere della Serra*, and "devastating and immoral" by Cesare De Michelis, a professor at the University of Padua. Veronese may be 'back home' as some Venetians like to see it, others still periodically hold mock trials of Napoleon and there are regular threats to sue the Louvre and the French government for the return of the original. As to whether technology can right a wrong is a question for debate. With the instantaneous uploading and distribution of imagery today we are back with DH Lawrence on *Art and Morality*, what Geoff Dyer *The Ongoing Moment* 2005, called, "one of his characteristic surges of intuitive analysis and prophecy". Written in 1925 for *Calendar* (a London literary monthly) Lawrence said: "This is the habit we have formed – of visualizing everything. Each man to himself a picture. That is, he is a complete little objective reality, complete in himself, existing by himself, absolutely, in the middle of the picture. All the rest is just setting, background... We see as the All-Seeing Eye sees, with universal vision. And we are what is seen; each man to himself an identity, an isolated absolute, corresponding with a universe of isolated absolutes... The picture of me, the me that is seen, is me." In 2014 a bizarre film that really was kitsch, *Beauty* by Rino Stefano Tagliafierro, works of art were animated in an attempt to dramatise the onlooker's imaginative process: the head of Holofernes fell, Venus of Urbino turned her head to look, and sun set over a ruined abbey.
- 196 The complexities of attribution are enormous. Taste is always a hostage to its era. Was it simply mistaken for a more highly valued contemporary artist? If it is a copy, who made it, when and why? Was a fake created deliberately to deceive or was it altered to meet the taste and fashions of a certain time? Fakes take many forms; signatures, dates and inscriptions added to improve identity and value, pictures doctored to make their content more agreeable, or aggressively and extensively restored to within an inch of their lives, and then some. Connoisseurship was on display in 2010 with the exhibition demonstrating the fallibility of experts at the National

Gallery in London. Deception and deceit, transformations and modifications, mistakes, secrets and conundrums, redemption and recovery were on display. *Close Examination: Fakes, Mistakes and Discoveries* displayed works that have been both downgraded and travelled in the opposite direction from suspicion to authenticity. It was an example of new technology changing the art world, a dialogue between scientists and art historians that explored the history of fakes, ambiguities of authorship, techniques to better date paintings and pigments, revise attributions. On another scientific front, light projection technology developed for theatrical performances and rock concerts has been used to 'virtually reintegrate' a lost sequence of a German 16th century mural by Hans Ritter, a student of Lucas Cranach the Elder. Michaela Janke worked from an 1898 watercolour copy by Gustav Ballin to create a digital picture file that when gridded up could be manipulated to allow for the curvature of the wall on which it was originally painted. The process is non-invasive and reversible, UV filters being used to avoid any possible damage to the original. A team led by Nicole Riedl then proceeded to complete the conservation in a way that clearly distinguishes between the original and the new additions.

- 197 The largest painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder was "a major discovery of outstanding importance for the history of art" announced the Prado in September 2010. Measuring 148x270.5cm this is the largest picture by the artist to have survived. The painting in glue-size tempera on linen had always been attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Younger. The image, known from an engraving by The Elder's great-grandson Ambrosius (1630/31-1690) who always considered it was by his grandfather Jan 'Velvet' Brueghel, was restored by Elisa Mora at the Prado when the present owners presented it for cleaning "with an option to buy". The existence of Ambrosius's print suggested there must have been a painted version. The Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna has a fragment of the right hand side of a similar composition, considered to be a Bruegel the Elder by Hulin de Loo, Gustav Glück and Friedländer, whereas others such as Sellink do not even list it as a questionable attribution, whilst the inventory drawn up by David Teniers II in 1659 described it as being by an unknown hand. A copy based on the new find, possibly by Ambrosius Brueghel, exists in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. The first documented owner of the 'new' Bruegel was Luis Francisco de la Cerda y Aragón, 9th Duke of Medinaceli (1660-1696) at one time ambassador to Rome, and later Viceroy of Naples. It has remained in the collection of the same family ever since, and was "in Spain no later than 1702 if not before". In its press release, the Prado drew an iconographic parallel between the painting and the central panel of *The Haywain* by Bosch that is also in its collection. The Prado stated that "Any remaining doubts regarding the attribution of the work were dispelled in early September [2010] with the discovery of the painter's signature, albeit incomplete and worn, and the remains of the date in Roman numerals: "MDL [...]". Both the characteristics of the signature and its location at the lower left, the location generally preferred by the artist, are comparable to the *Two Monkeys* in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie (1562), *Christ and the Adulteress* in the Courtauld Institute Galleries (1565), and *The Conversion of Saul* in Vienna (1567)." In a review of art collections that included paintings by Pieter Bruegel during the lifetime of Pieter the Younger, Document 19, an inventory of the estate of Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga drawn up at Mantua on the order of Duke Vincenzo, lists the 'Feast of Saint Martin' with a value of 360 livres. See Dominique Allart *Brueghel Enterprises* 2001 p50
- 198 Silva Maroto, head of the Prado's Department of Flemish Painting and Northern Schools (1400-1600) speaking 23 September 2011 at the unveiling of the work, quoting the technical and documentary report published the same day: *Section IV Technique*.
- 199 *The Fall of Icarus* canvas 73x111.5 KMSKB-MRBAB, Brussels; *The Fall of Icarus* panel 62.5x89.7cm Van Buuren Museum, Brussels. See Currie and Allart *The Brueg[el] Phenomenon* 2012 pp844-872 for the story of the unknown followers.
- 200 Immanuel Kant "Aus so krummem Holze, als woraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert werden" It was used by Isaiah Berlin for his book: *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*
- 201 The indictment read like a forger's manual with details of the all the materials required to counterfeit a painting, and how to create its "plausible, but entirely false" provenance with a fraudulent history of ownership. The paintings provided by a Long Island dealer, Glafira Rosales, were sold by Knoedler over 15 years for \$63 million. The 'signatures' contained spelling errors.

202 Colin Simpson *The Partnership. The Secret Association of Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen* 1987 'greedy...' was Duveen's view of Berenson p71; 'blithely...' is Simpson on Duveen p106. Selling a fake painting always requires far more than a good artist who has become a gifted imitator. It relies on a network of people creating a veneer of respectability and credibility. Experts authenticating works for a fee or a cut of the profits made from a sale continued to be exposed as the Qian case unfolded in 2014 with the estates of a number of artists alleging curators at established museums were involved, whilst others admitted that they had not made public statements for fear of lawsuits from the private galleries involved. Keeping quiet has always been standard practice.

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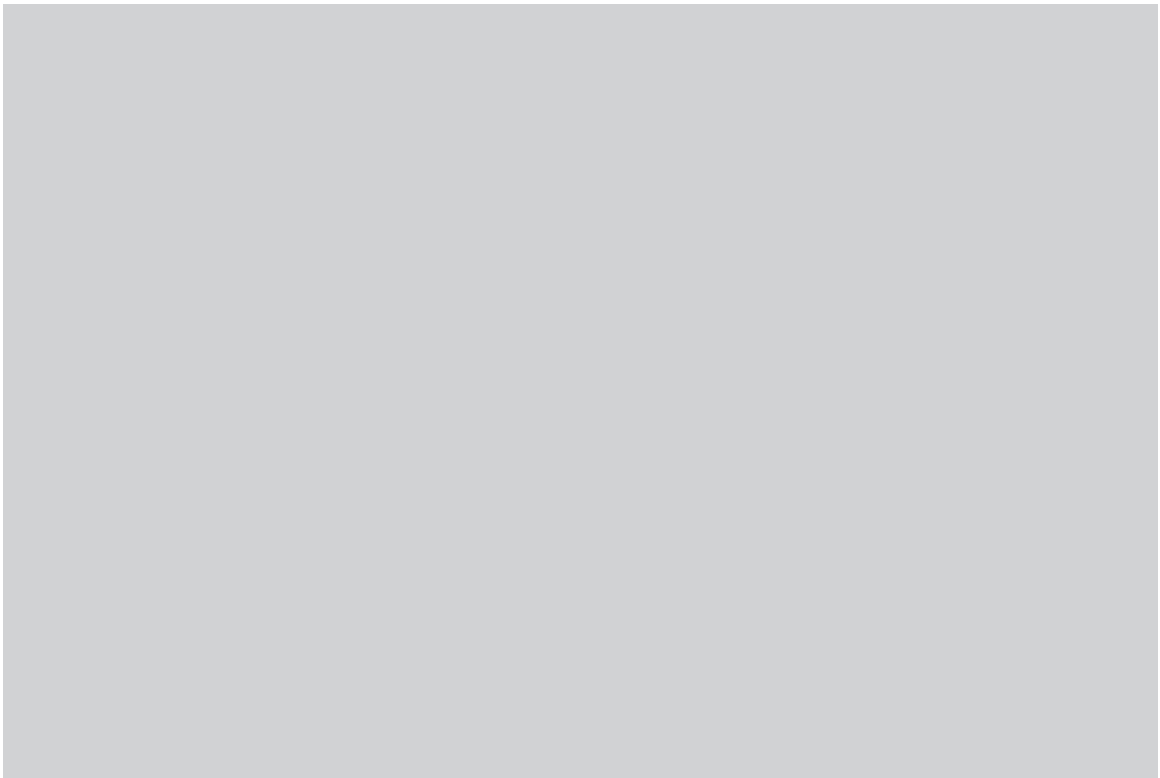
Art as history, history as art

The art of the historian enriched
by the history of art

Conflicts and mirrors

Witnesses to the Old World and The New

“Art cannot exist before it is interpreted”



275 Martin Parr *Paris, Le Louvre* 2012 © Martin Parr/Magnum¹

The art of the historian enriched by the history of art

"The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie.

One word of truth outweighs the world" Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

"Proclaim the truth and do not be silent through fear" St Catherine of Siena

DO WORKS OF ART provide us with knowledge that is significantly different from that offered elsewhere.² Preziosi asks this question in one of his introductory sections as he embarks on his historiography, a historical narrative of critical perspectives on art history, and history of histories anthology. Contiguous with many other forms of enquiry from myths to ethnography, art history may well 'disclose the truth' of something. Ruskin argued that history was written by the victors, literature by the partisan, but that art and architecture alone conveyed the soul of the age, and thereby spoke a truth that is inaccessible in the written word: art therefore was an eternal truth, and one that offered a window into the heart and soul of mankind. Truth.

Having started with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and how through the process of observation, the observer alters the outcome, we have arrived at Martin Heidegger's debateable 1935 lecture *The Origin of the Work of Art*: "Art is truth setting itself to work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes comes to pass as art?" Jacques Derrida later took Heidegger's work, coined the term deconstruction and applied it to art history: could there be a 'deconstructivist' art history?³ As Donald Preziosi considered the implications: "to art history's art and to its history of art, as well as to the history of art history"⁴ – there was yet another twist to art history's search for original intentions and interpretations, as "deconstruction is systematically a style of thinking rather than logically coordinated premises and conclusions" within which there is no truth, except in contradictory terms and multiple frameworks of meaning.⁵

Contradictions, frameworks, truths. As Bosch and Bruegel incorporated personal experience into their work, to transform and to transcend it, I have tried to demonstrate that with very different motives they set 'truth to work' as they saw it, the framework within which they worked, and the contradictions inherent in the result. Mine is not a deconstructionist approach but I now realise that I have mixed a number of techniques as I have attempted to set out why I believe both artists were assembling knowledge rather than setting puzzles. My task has been to explain why they painted what they did and as they did and, in part to appreciate things as they might have done, to establish the inspiration for the images they produced and explain the relationships between the facts, setting their social, religious, and political motivation in a wider perspective, a narrative of their times, its historical setting. I have not argued that theirs are exercises in mimesis, but as they undoubtedly manipulate a wealth of associations they certainly capture the power and poetry of the age. Christianity was the centre of life for them both, and the truth they told was in the cause of their beliefs.

In 1484 William Caxton honoured Geoffrey Chaucer above all others when he wrote in the proem to the second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*: "Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks, poets, and historiographers that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of histories of noble and famous acts and faites, and of the chronicles since the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time, by which we be daily informed and have knowledge of many things of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their monuments written."

The convention that claims Herodotus and Thucydides as the first historians, acknowledges the importance of preserving knowledge of the past, keeping records and making

accounts. Record keeping is commercial and bureaucratic good practice; it is not an art. But Herodotus used the word 'historia' to describe what he did. It was an inquiry: systematic research as he investigated Egyptian and Greek archives, the results of which he rendered as entertaining narrative. Inventories of transactions, systematic chronologies, the development of legal codes, treaties signed and broken, the itemisation of weaponry, are all so many lists until they are explained. This stewardship of records coupled with an analysis of their development may make history appear more akin to accountancy, but the narrative drive that comes from telling the stories of, for example, military campaigns and expeditions, of victories, spoils, discoveries, deliverance, and vindication, all furnished chronicles to establish the justice of what had been done, attempting to achieve redemption in the eyes of their people, and their gods.

The vivid accounts and elaborate prose employed by these chronicler-propagandists to explain their self-extolling histories eventually became stand-alone annals, the fundamental historiographical form until the end of the Middle Ages. (Herodotus used the historic present tense, so beloved by television presenters of history today as a sop to the culture of immediacy, to make it more immediate, and bring it to life.) Highly selective, judgemental, and biased as they were, it was a version of truth-telling by historians, acting as the willing servants of political projects, just as some artists have burnished history for their clients. In the diversity of its presentation, history is not an isolated pursuit but an essential aspect of the culture of Europe. Looking at the way history is recorded can help us understand the past. The choice of subject matter and the religious, partisan, and patriotic circumstances in which that material was assembled can itself teach us about the time the selection was made. What was distinctive about that period then? Why record it at that time? What drove those choices? What might be accomplished by analysing a subject there? Why should attention be focused on that piece of the past? Whose past?

The collective identity that emerges from providential history, be it confessional, ideological, or national, has the potential to tell us a great deal about the era in which it was created. Historiography is a 20th century phenomenon. As to whether systematic archival research and the critical examination of sources is an art in itself or a science may be left for another day. But the way in which the past is presented certainly tells us something. Historians can be condescending towards images as 'soft' evidence of the past, reluctant to acknowledge the hints, and even sometimes corroboration, offered by art when trying to interpret former times. Art historians can suspect historians of being hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts. They need each other. History without images is blind, art without texts is deaf: each is more potent in combination with the other. Huizinga for one understood they were indivisibly related, using art in his analysis of history like Burckhardt before him.⁶ And whilst the Renaissance in Italy remained dynastic, in the possession of the Church and the aristocracy, in the Netherlands it became the possession of the people with its artistic subject matter encompassing human existence in its entirety from the most vulgar to the devotional, an art that mirrored the life of everyman, from low-life to still-life, from landscape to historical – a history inseparable from its art, an art with the distinctive, sharp smack of life. The narrative detail of so much Netherlandish art thickens the painting's broth, enhancing its taste of life.

This intellectual nourishment combined with the sheer visual pleasure of standing before a picture for a hard sober look as we consider the creative process behind its development, together with the broader historical perspective of its roots, is at the heart of the artist's ability to tell an engaging story. As touchstones for their age, the paintings of Bosch and Bruegel work as a 'period eye' demonstrating Wölfflin's edict that "vision itself has a history" filing reports from the front line of their 'visual culture' in a capacious mix of seeing and picturing.⁷ Comprehending their function as tools for discussion and aids for devotion flings open a series of windows on to the late-medieval world. Criticising them for inaccuracies in their storylines

does not negate their value to us in conveying that period with a pictorial turn of history.

Just as historians, and even art historians, will bend the truth occasionally, sacrificing it for the sake of a well-turned sentence as Kenneth Clark admitted in 1977, and Panofsky would bend the evidence to fit the needs of a story, so artists take licence with the veracity of their reportage as they map the spirit of their age for us in a series of cartographic moments, providing an 'image atlas' of history.⁸

We have to understand what we are looking at to make use of a picture as a visual source. Artistic quality is no guarantee of historical interest and images of historical interest may be devoid of artistic merit. The past portrayed may well be a fiction of the artist, an innocent eye guilty of manipulating facts. Nevertheless, inadequate as the documentary evidence may sometimes be, those innocent eyes convey the mentality of their age, and their impact on the historical imagination may be seen as significant. For us it can be more a question of deciphering aspects of earlier societies than it is of unravelling aspects of a picture to interpret it.

The pictures tell a story, the artists demonstrating a muscular and uncanny gift for telling tales, their settings rich in detail, their narrative imagination distinct, conjuring nothing less than the enigmatic, irresistible majesty of the past that governs human action, images that incarnate history. In using art in his analysis of history Huizinga was particularly interested in the rituals and symbols of religious and chivalric life, tournaments, regal entries, dynastic weddings, together with everyday experiences of life at all levels, in a world structured as a hierarchy of symbolic meanings and correspondences, the code for which was generally understood, but which we might crack through looking at art. Thinking in images was characteristic of Huizinga's autumnal world, a melancholy place in an age where "long after nobility and feudalism had ceased to be the really essential factors in the state and society, they continued to impress the mind as dominant forms of life".⁹ But then, "art always lived from symbols more than from facts."¹⁰ Even Ruskin hedged his bets, considering that 'art is not a study in positive reality, it is the seeking for ideal truth'.

In order to understand this (or any age) we have not only to fathom the forces transforming it but its illusions. Art may well both create and destroy those illusions.¹¹ But it must always be remembered that in leaving us with a sense of the past we are looking at an image that the past has left us of itself. The relationship between art and the historical imagination is clear when we consider the work of Bosch as one of the last reflections of a civilisation that some saw in a state of final decay. His may be an elegy and a valentine to that vanishing world held dear in the collective imagination of the time, but it was also a fast-disappearing two-fisted brand of late medieval art that has the heart and energy of the perpetually engaged, insatiably curious observer Bosch never ceased to be.

Many clues in Bruegel's work appear to herald the new society that the old world in its death throes conceived: his eyes stretched wide by nature, his resistance to the growing influence of Italy, the Renaissance in full view, foreshadowing a revolution in art. They led to much historical speculation and Bruegel being posited as a product of a new world, when in fact he spent his time looking backwards, and his vantage point remained medieval.

Bruegel resurrected the past by immersing his own personality and his times in pictorial historical narratives, resulting in a historical synthesis of great dramatic power. In doing that he pre-echoes Michelet's statement that history should be a resurrection of the spirit of the past, bringing old stories alive for his generation. For him, history is an art of memory. As a witness to the impact of the Reformation, and the reaction to it, the pageant of the recent past and the all too present now was a collective saga, and the backdrop to the inspiring power of his people's collective memory.

Here we enter the spectral realm of quantum mnemonics; there is no past, there are just versions of the past. Artists play fast and loose with the present at times, and certainly they

hijack the past – because painting the past is never a neutral act. The gravitational pull of the past alters, reshuffles, intrudes – on everything. It reconfigures history. Why? Because we want a second chance, another version of our life, sometimes we just want it hijacked.

Paint radiates something more luminous, on the surface more credible, and more durable than real facts, because under the stewardship of the artist, it is not truth we are after; what we want instead is something that was always there but that we were not seeing, and are only now, with the genius of retrospection, finally seeing it as it should have occurred and might as well have occurred and, better still, is still likely to occur. In art, the difference between the no more and the not yet is totally negligible. We may have many pasts, just as we may have multiple identities at the same time, or in our mind's eye be in two places at once without actually being in either.

"Painting has everything to do with memory" James Rosenquist¹²

"The question is not what you look at, but what you see" Henry David Thoreau¹³

The art of memory is an arcane intellectual pursuit on the edge of popular culture, but it enthralled Renaissance philosophers who saw it as an essential skill, the mnemonist's task being "to attach the facts he wished to recall to images that were so visually striking or emotionally evocative that they could be recalled at will" and used to explain human experience in terms of a vision that unifies knowledge in coherent ways.¹⁴ Its revival at a time when the advent of printing should have rendered it obsolete is a surprise, yet from the rhetoric of sophistry to metaphysics the old techniques remained essentially the same, a resilient imagination bolstered by the aesthetic appeal of vivid pictorial images employed by the scholastics in communicating moral lessons.¹⁵ It was another way to establish correspondences between the microcosm of the mind's images and the macrocosm of the ideal universe, which were believed to be congruent structures.¹⁶

For us, this is not simply about an insistence that past cultures should be understood in their own terms as distinct from present-day ones because, as Baxandall for one recognised, there are limits to the potential of historical contextualising, whilst nevertheless considering art anchored in its social and cultural history as providing the basis for a richer and more solid interpretation grounded in realities rather than subjective impressions. For Bruegel, Burckhardt's 'veil of faith and illusion between the medieval world and the Renaissance' was comprehensively penetrated as he visualised a civilisation trying to balance wild lusts and cruelty with exaggerated piety, the devout, hard-working community with avarice, day-to-day existence with the dreams and illusions of out-dated chivalry.

Huizinga had no doubts: "With astonishment we now realise that it is something more than bawdry that he has to offer – that his work ranks with the greatest and most profound. This deeper understanding has not sprung from a systematic study of sixteenth-century cultural history. Yet it will lead us into seeing sixteenth-century Dutch history more lucidly, more sharply and more colourfully – in short, more historically."¹⁷

The image came first. Through the image we see the past: it is art as history.

Huizinga admitted in his lectures that it was images that provided the initial stimulus to his historical studies, and he wrote of "the change of our ideas about the Middle Ages is due less to a weakening of the romantic sense than to the substitution of artistic for intellectual appreciation" more recently retranslated as a rhetorical question "is it a common phenomenon that the fine arts leave a brighter image of an age than the words of poets and historians" to which his answer is "absolutely affirmative."¹⁸ Haskell later wrote of Michelet's belief in 'art of bringing the past to life' and 'the intensity with which [he] everywhere turned to the visual arts to help him in his task' as he 'invented' the Renaissance as 'the discovery of the world, the discovery of man' and the 'rebirth of art.'¹⁹

Thus we arrive at an interdisciplinary study of religiously grounded visual culture that

in the case of Bosch and Bruegel means making art preoccupied with resembling what the world looked like to them. They encompass belief, reason and art, and are not what we call history painters in any conventional sense of the genre formulated in 1667 by André Félibien. Their historicity is not their *raison d'être*. They are decidedly not pellucid, unmediated accounts of visual experience. Neither are they the proper material of social history in the much abused and misunderstood interpretation of that phrase following Michael Baxandall's work.²⁰ What reading and looking and seeing afresh with the fruits of Baxandall's erudition nevertheless did, was encourage us to engage with the unfamiliar. With the over-familiar images of Bosch and Bruegel we might be prompted to reflect and learn from our own judgements and consider how they differ from, say, a fifteenth century patron or a sixteenth century merchant, how the painters' public "constructed and perceived pictorial depictions, how they exercised and developed pictorial intelligence, and how this related to the special nature of the painter's representational medium" – in other words how a work of art comes to take a particular form within a given society and the conventions of their age.²¹ The changing nature of engagement is at the heart of the matter, what the beholder brings to viewing a picture. "When we look at the paintings... we can give a sense, our sense, to the Milanese agent's remarks, but it is unlikely that this sense is his."²² What was obvious and in plain view to him might well be a heuristic process for us, our 'relative perception' and ways of seeing worlds apart, just what was in the eye of the beholder there to decipher.

Questions of depiction and perception lead us to consider how pictures were 'read' and the extent to which the public could empathise with them, the function of a picture, how central to their lives they were, the uses made of them, the clarity of their composition, their style and quality, the enduring importance of their religious narrative, and just how cogent, memorable and emotionally engaged would they have been.

These artists mould the truth to their storyline.

With their comprehensive inclusion of evidence of visual and pictorial culture Bosch and Bruegel set out to provoke speculative thoughts and close attention to the epistemological claims these paintings make about moments in history, driving us to look harder and see more. They are provocative. Indeed, considering the conditions of their work's reception, they can only be understood against the tide of history. Questions surrounding issues of their production and pictorial development are then secondary.

In the case of Bosch it is a multimedia exercise that makes use of a complex interplay between texts, marginal images, anecdotes, proverbs, sexual drolleries, magic, visual puns based on Middle Dutch, etc.²³ The slavish pursuit of the definitive interpretation has led to endless journeys down the highways of Boschiana – Falkenburg for example, discovering a library in Brussels as the point of reference for the artist's source material without any evidence as to its existence.²⁴

In the case of Bruegel it is more limited, nevertheless it went from pictorialising the life of everyman to allegories that incorporated political commentary overlaying doctrinal observance and theological reflections as the artist participated in the religious debate that was being literally fought out around him. The work is always descriptive, idiosyncratic certainly, highly innovative, verging on the encyclopaedic, moving from the fun and curious to the true, art as *beschryvinghe* that goes from *curieuse* to *waere*. But with Bosch and Bruegel we can see that the partition between the medieval and the early modern seems less defined, the boundary (Burckhardt's 'veil') quite translucent.

Their art is akin to theology, grounded in medieval devotional imagery they invite us to contemplate, opening windows on to a different reality. The difficulty for us five centuries later is not to focus too much on the object itself, its age, its construction, its history, that we forget to gaze beyond it. Baxandall posed the questions we have to answer in this case when he asked "how far we are really going to penetrate into the intentional fabric of painters living in cultures or

periods remote from our own” and “whether we can in any sense or degree verify or validate our explanations”.²⁵ This is what may be achieved by setting Bosch and Bruegel in context. Reading them from the vantage point on the other side of time is not easy: “heeding the intellectual and social contexts that have enveloped works of art through history is one of the routes towards appreciating primary intentions” but “historical understanding will never quite take us there,” the chasm between then and now impossible to cross satisfactorily as we “are not faced by the task of arresting what otherwise would slip away, but enlivening what otherwise would remain dead”.²⁶

These images may be looked at as agents provocateurs, marriages of the discursive and the visual experience that have taken an ‘iconic turn’ now requiring a hermeneutic response in the viewer. They are, in the words of Hans Belting, cult images that deal ‘with people and their beliefs, superstitions, hopes and fears’. It took moral courage to speak out, or in this case, paint. The relationship between painting and preaching was never closer. According to Aquinas, devotion was an appetite ‘on the part of the soul’, an ‘act of religion’ that involved the ‘conscious and willed turning of the mind to God’. Its special means was meditation and its effect mingled spiritual ‘joy at God’s goodness and sadness at man’s inadequacy’.²⁷ I referred at the end of my first chapter to ‘sermons in paint’. Pressing reason into the service of faith in a development of Augustine,²⁸ Aquinas’s serene confidence in the harmony of faith and reason and in the ability to reason, enlightened by faith, to come to an understanding of God and his saving plan, did not specify a means, whilst “... The beam of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sense imagery that veils it and its truth does not flicker out, since the minds of those given the revelation are not allowed to remain arrested with the images but are lifted up to their meaning”.²⁹

Conflicts and mirrors

According to Burckhardt there was no philosophy of history “for history co-ordinates, and hence is unphilosophical, while philosophy subordinates, and hence is unhistorical” history being unsystematic and systems unhistorical.³⁰ Burckhardt did not tell stories like most of his contemporaries, he pictured the age through a series of cross-sections emphasising the ‘constant, the recurrent, the typical’ woven together into a textured whole of cultural unity. That texture is woven artistically from the myth-maker’s bricolage, ‘mythical thought... imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning’.³¹

History, philosophy, and art. “It is widely accepted that Plato defined art as imitation, though whether this is a theory or merely observation is difficult to say, since there was nothing else by way of art in Athens at the time.” Danto tells how Plato “was eager to get rid of the artists on the grounds that art was of minimal practical use” a view he emphasised by drawing up “a map of human knowledge, placing art at the lowest possible level – with reflections, shadows, dreams, and illusions”. The problem was that “moral pedagogy should be left to philosophers, who used not imitations but reality in explaining the way things are.” Of course, Plato had Socrates suggest that if you wanted to imitate or capture an appearance nothing could be better than a mirror which gave perfect reflections “better than an artist can usually achieve”.³² How short-sighted of Plato.

There are degrees of reflection just as there are degrees of imitation. Some art is imitation and some is not. The illusory nature of art that Plato refers to in *The Republic* questions truth in art whereas the tradition that Homer represents insists that far from being distant imitators artists create works that embody truth. By attempting to mediate between the mystery of life and human emotion, through stories and visual metaphors, art can play a role in shaping a community’s understanding of itself, hence it should come as no surprise when this is frequently linked to religious belief. And whilst Socrates advocates censorship of the

arts, 'we honour it but we do not want it in our ideal society', it is the power of art's potential that frightens Plato. "Every man carries within him through life a mirror, as unique and impossible to get rid of as his shadow... Thus if a painter tries to portray the Seven Deadly Sins, his experience will furnish him readily enough with images symbolic of Gluttony, Lust, Sloth, Anger, Avarice, and Envy, for all these qualities of a person's relations to others and the world, but no experience can provide an image of Pride, for the relation it qualifies is the subjective relation of a person to himself. In the seventh frame, therefore, the painter can only place, in lieu of a canvas, a mirror."³³

Vasari set the model that others tried to follow. He wanted to explain the course of things since history was 'the true mirror of human life' revealing human intentions in the course of art as he discovered 'the cause and the roots of each style'. By the 19th century the two words art and history had been brought together and a dilemma had arisen, describing art in the framework of its own history. If the art is embodied in the work and history, in theory at least, the meaning behind events, some clarification was required. Yet as early as 1764 Johann Joachim Winckelmann did just that. Taking his cue from Cicero that history was 'a literary art' he attempted to extract 'the very nature of art... from the works themselves' and to set it in the context of history. "He was concerned here with elucidating the relations between the historian as subject and the historian's object of study in such a way as to be productive of knowledge about the individual object, and about the nature of art itself more universally (art as uniquely revelatory about individuals and peoples)."³⁴ The unfolding tradition of 'history of artistic precedent' as a series of chronicles of lives and commissions had been usurped by the 'history of art' – art emblematic of culture and its quintessential expression, a new blueprint where art was set within systematic history.

In writing about art history as a discipline Belting saw in its roots a "worship of history". He made reference to the fact that "the exercise to contemplate art as a privileged manifestation of history and to understand the changes in art as an index of the temporality of history" enabled the demonstration of "the course of history in the mirror of art."³⁵ Yet rather than a 'period eye' Wölfflin believed in a catalogue of general laws applicable to art: he considered there to be an 'absolute eye' overlooking all art in its history, whereas Belting points out that the "historical styles mirror historical modes of perception that we can reconstruct today with their help."³⁶ More than anything Belting called for new methods, "other than those analysing stylistic forms" as a way of considering art, moving the debate from methods of production to conditions of reception. "People have at all times seen what they want to see" said Wölfflin, an argument Ernst Gombrich reproduces and elaborates in *Art and Illusion*.³⁷ With reference to Wölfflin, David Summers pointed out that "the notion of interpretive vision might have been carried a step further to include the critic or historian, the analogy being that just as a painter interprets what is seen and reveals his or her own spirit in the forms in which what is seen is expressed, so the historian has a point of view in the expression of which psychology, ideology, or general culture and historical predicament are to be discerned. But the complexities of such a hermeneutic position seem to have been almost entirely ignored or avoided by art historians."³⁸

In calling for a 'descriptive art history' Roger Fry thought that in his examination of the formal structures of works of art Wölfflin "begins where most art historians leave off" by looking deeply into the creative process and the mind of the artist – "why at such a date and in such surroundings the picture has the form that we see".³⁹ As Herbert Read pointed out, "He misses nothing in a painting or a piece of sculpture, and accounts for everything".⁴⁰ Read also pointed out that Wölfflin is "searching for a concept of art history which would avoid on the one hand the superficiality of a subjective interpretation of art (art as an expression of the spirit of the age) and on the other hand the aridity of a purely formalistic type of art criticism."⁴¹ But the mode of vision, of 'imaginative beholding' as Wölfflin referred to it, developed throughout history, and 'is not from the outset and everywhere the same'. He quite rightly sums this up by saying: "Instead

of asking “How do these works affect me, the modern man?” and estimating their expressional content by that standard, the historian must realise what choice of formal possibilities the epoch had at its disposal. An essentially different interpretation would then result.”⁴²

Wölfflin believed there was a history of artistic vision. The imagination had nationalist dimensions: there were differences in a nation’s eyes. This concept of vision was criticised by Panofsky who believed it downgraded the contextual-historical interpretation of art.⁴³ Iconology was his battle cry of 1939 in an attempt to retrieve the true meaning of art. By examining documents and texts drawn from the artist’s world, we might retrieve the cultural knowledge stored in the production of historical art, the same documents classicists and historians celebrated as their sources. By 1953, Panofsky’s ‘big Flemish book’ – his longest and most ambitious project made it the unimpeachable authority for too long – was, significantly, written at a distance; he had not seen the paintings he was writing about for over a decade, and he never visited the Prado.⁴⁴ Meaning, subject matter, content, these were his concerns; iconographic interpretation that correlated imagery with other cultural information to explain complex and multi-layered clarifications was his approach. “Iconology, then, is a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis. And as the correct identification of motifs is the prerequisite of their correct iconographical analysis, so is the correct analysis of images, stories and allegories the prerequisite of their correct iconological interpretation.”⁴⁵ Layers of meaning, levels of knowledge, ‘synthetic intuition’, historical experience, ‘disguised symbolism’, theological complexities, standards of interpretation, it all led some towards ‘methods and games of academic discipline’ with iconology becoming a tool of analysis, and even “the radical position of some... that interpreters actually remake the objects of their attention... Thus works of art have come to be regarded today less as product and more as process, and criticism by the scholar has come to play an increasing role in the analysis, along with attention to the social dimensions of both the production and the consumption of works of art in a culture”.⁴⁶

The conditions of reception: we are back to Baxandall and Falkenburg. For Ruskin, both artist and audience had to perceive with an innocent eye, attempting to forget visual conventions, something Gombrich for one dismissed: “the innocent eye is a myth” he wrote, our attempts to match image and reality the result of interplay between the expected and the unexpected, perception something we learn, and ‘pictorial realism a historical and collective product’ determined by culture.⁴⁷

However, the ‘period inner eye’ in relation to Bosch and Bruegel is a suitable description because in their work the dialogue between art, history and belief is never far away as they hold a mirror to their age to reflect its trials and conflicts. Mirrors may give us a false sense of confidence, the reflection we choose to focus on having nothing to do with how others see us. Mirrors cannot always be trusted, the glass may lie, but even the most effective lies can bear the ring of truth. It is when one loses sight of oneself that one loses one’s way. The direction of travel for one’s soul is at the heart of Bosch, the soul of Bruegel is in the orientation of one’s heart, both of them continually reminding their audience that with St Jerome “the face is the mirror of the mind, and eyes without speaking confess the secrets of the heart”.⁴⁸ If you doubt it, consider a few questions. What were their relationships to the times? Did they simply ignore it? Art as escapism? Did they propagandise? Did one conspire with the Church, and one with nationalists or collaborate with his oppressors? Was one the hired hack of the medieval Church and the other the hired hack of the Counter-Reformation? A novelist can suggest what things mean, a dramatist must show you what happens, these two artists wield both talents to tell stories in a single complete picture. They connected art with history; they painted what they decided to see.

Witnesses to the Old World and The New

Bosch and Bruegel – assembling knowledge not setting puzzles

TAS I BEGAN this book: ‘my hypothesis is that both Bosch and Bruegel were assembling knowledge rather than setting puzzles’. By setting their work in a wider perspective I have tried to demonstrate why the social, religious, and political motivation in their art should not, in my opinion, be described in art historical isolation. I have not attempted to establish that their art is in any way a direct record of events but to explain why they both capture something of the power and poetry of their times, manipulating the wealth of associations we have of their era, showing the driving forces of the world around them and passing a visual commentary on them. Because the lives of these two artists cross the frontier between the medieval and the modern world they have been viewed very differently with the passage of time, and it is our distance from the upheaval at this turning-point in world history that gave rise to subsequent audiences appreciating the work of Bosch and Bruegel in conflicting ways. Historians are fond of turning points, years that act as a hinge from which they may hang their theories. Sometimes they are turning-points when history fails to turn, as AJP Taylor wrote of 1848, sometimes there are ends but no new beginnings, for which 1917 might be a candidate, but there can be no argument about the passing of feudal Europe and the flashpoint of the Reformation. That these two artists have left us a record of their times I have no doubt, and by doing that they have assembled knowledge that we may draw on to better understand the age in which they lived.

By establishing the spirit of the age within which to frame my arguments I believe I have arrived at what Gombrich calls a “principle of intersection” when a number of factors fit together in a plausible, complete and precise way, to provide a persuasive interpretation and comprehensive explanation of what we are looking at. Does their work represent the spirit of the age or not? Is it a valid perspective? I believe so, and I trust I have demonstrated that fact.

Religion, period inner vision, politics and landscape

I have followed four themes: the imagined paradise of period inner vision, and how through the process of observation, the observer alters the outcome; the paradise lost of medieval religion, a world lost to us that Bosch feared was about to end, and Bruegel saw violently changing before his eyes as ‘God’s eyes see what ours cannot’; how they both survived in a world where religion was politics and politics religion, a place where paradise was indefinitely postponed; and lastly how through landscape there was just a chance that paradise might be regained. With the wayfarer everyone is tempted to look back over their shoulder, to think what might have been, but, as both these artists encourage us, we must somehow find the courage to walk forward to an uncertain future, and to be faithful for the lifetime of that journey as we seek an end to the story.

Conventional wisdom, the wider debate and controversy

I had a story I wanted to tell, an argument I wanted to make, an interpretation I wished to offer, and in doing that found myself challenging traditional narratives.

Conventional wisdom on Jheronimus Bosch may be summed up as follows: despite following in the footsteps of masters such as the Master of Flémalle and Jan van Eyck whose paintings were “imbued with the solemnity of divine service and so inspired the faithful to humble devotion and mystic exaltation of the soul... With Bosch art begins to shake off the tutelage of the Church.”⁴⁹ That the academic tournament over the interpretation of work by Bosch never ends is unsurprising considering the fascination that Hell and devilry hold for

mankind. This in spite of the fact that De Guevara in 1563 pointed out “that ordinary people – and not just them – incorrectly viewed Bosch as an inventor of devils” with imitators showing little understanding of his work.⁵⁰ Lampsonius thought the artist revealed “the far regions of Hell”, Van Mander that he “rendered with his brush specters and monsters of Hell” and so on, the avid reader could plunge into the depths of evil phantasmagoria until the end of the 19th century when, as I set out above, art history changed.

Waves of interpretation have crashed over Bosch since then, in many cases following whatever was the fashionable argument of the day. The overall coherence of his oeuvre is ignored as views as to his realism, iconographical sources, his dreams, cult following, cerebrally symbolic sexuality coalescing into erotomania, possible schizophrenia, even addictions, have all been advanced in a never-ending stream of explication that have at times completely disregarded historical criticism, culminating in 1947 with Fraenger positing the artist’s membership of a secret heretical liberation sect. Along with subsequent criticism, Bosch has too often been viewed outside of his social milieu, spiritual mentality, cultural perspective and historical setting. In 1949 some felt Bax ‘fell victim to the mania for interpretation’ with his remarkable explanation of so many details worked up from puns, and common expressions in Middle Dutch (an approach successfully followed since 2000 by Eric De Bruyn), much to the annoyance of Fraenger who saw it as vulgar trivialisation of Bosch’s arcane imagery: it was merely “folkloric exegesis”.⁵¹ As Bax fundamentally criticised this vociferous critic, ‘Fraenger bashing’ became a sporting contest.

“Spraying cold water on a witch hunt is one of the duties that a critic should be ready to perform”.⁵² Vandenbroeck would build on the iconographical researches of Bax but thankfully took it further to emphasise the social, economic and political resonances in the pictures, his relationship to a highly literate vernacular culture, and how the work provided an elite audience with what it wanted: more worldly responses to earthly problems that privileged the intelligentsia.

Today we have debates over left-handed drawings, elements of cross-hatching, two or three styles of underdrawing, different styles of underdrawing on the same triptych, different painting techniques on the same painting, paint application, and lead white highlights. We deliberate over two entirely different people each producing a number of the triptychs – even several Bosch Doppelgänger, ghostly counterparts of the master – anonymous epigones we might distinguish as the Master of this and the Master of that. We discuss the question of a single master or a single workshop, and the number of workshop assistants. We dispute the marketing of the family business, even a seal of quality applied by Nachfolgen in order to maintain and extend ‘the brand’. From the ‘legacy views’ of conventional wisdom to the minority positions of insurgent critical views, and beyond, to Falkenburg’s “speculative study” of *The Land of Unlikeness*, a “rhapsodic reading” set around the “interplay between image and beholder” that works because of the tradition of “speculative vision” – a debateable topic for a debateable painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*⁵³ we contest all of this and more. Debates, deliberations, discussions, disputes, we discourse controversial opinions.

If we reject overarching theories of heresy, alchemy, astrology, verbal and visual punning, and so on, it is still necessary to acknowledge one’s indebtedness to the insights and reflections of so many writers, something I trust I have done throughout my book, and not become bewitched by any particular theory. I hope that I have demonstrated how the spiritual and artistic aims that underpin his creative invention and personal intentions lay bare the contradictions of his age as he addresses the spiritual faculties of his audience from within the framework of traditional religious themes as he cries desperately for help in a world delivered up to Satan, “Salva nos, xpe redemptor”.⁵⁴ Everyday reality, infernal scenery, pictorial rhetoric, religious conformity, moral instruction, naïve characterisations, the misery of the human

condition, in a world both terrifying and ridiculous, frightened and foolish, moral sermons all summed up in the anticipatory delight of cruel and demonic faces confronting us, ready to burst out of the picture and overwhelm us.

“Is it possible for us to grasp the view of the world held by these pious Brabanters?”⁵⁵ With great difficulty is the answer, but Bosch is on hand to help us, whilst the artefacts of our common cultural inheritance not unsurprisingly become unfamiliar after half a millennia. But just as Bosch ‘alone had the courage to paint man as he is inside’ in the judgement of Siguença so we are back to our own judgemental eye, a God’s-eye perspective on history and the impact of the force of evil on His creation as mankind heads for eternal punishment and damnation: “Neither does He see in one fashion by the eye, in another by the mind, for He is not composed of mind and body; nor does His present knowledge differ from that which it ever was or shall be, for those variations of time, past, present, and future, though they alter our knowledge, do not affect His”.⁵⁶ Thus set against the cultural backdrop of the times, Bosch becomes accessible even to our erudite analyses.

Once Panofsky had taken Aquinas as his guiding light, seeing early Netherlandish art in the service of religion, as “Holy Scripture delivers spiritual things to us beneath metaphors taken from bodily things” – in sacra scriptura traduntur nobis spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium, metaphorical didactics that find support in Aristotelian epistemology, where ‘beneath’ has a double meaning.⁵⁷ For Aquinas, ‘beneath’ signifies both the ‘vehicle’ and the ‘screen’ of revelation: “thereby divine matters are more effectively screened against those unworthy of them” – per huiusmodi divina magis occultantur indignis. Just as the saint plays with the metaphorical and the explicit in scripture, so art may play with physical disguise: in the words of Aquinas occultation figurarum utilis. Imagery may deliberately veil the beam of divine revelation but its truth does not flicker out.⁵⁸ Whilst he believed that the key to Bosch had not been found, Panofsky suspected the artist “was not so much a heretic as one of those extreme moralists who, obsessed with what they fight, are haunted, not unpleasurably, by visions of unheard of obscenities, perversions and tortures.”⁵⁹

“Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not the sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be” José Ortega y Gasset

Friedländer got it wrong when he wrote that Bosch’s viewpoint was considerably more intellectual than that of Brueghel [sic]. Van Mander was, in my opinion, wrong about the artist’s trip to Italy. Nearly everyone was wrong in believing that Bruegel was leaving the Middle Ages behind.

Far from being a lowbrow, Alpine-walking, early modern man, Bruegel demonstrates an integrity and an elegance of mind that is continually refining itself with knowledge – the very opposite of the uneducated vulgarity some insist on seeing in his work. He displays passion and steadfastness, layers of correspondence with his audience, their suffering, pain and horror, sympathy for and connection with his fellow countrymen. His thoughtful ensuing search for private connection and social consequence can overwhelm with their extraordinary sense of urgency. He was in a hurry. He had a great deal to say and not long to say it. The urgency came from a sense of staring into a grave. “The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time” might serve as his motto.⁶⁰

Sometimes called ‘the century of Bruegel’ after a life that stretched just 44 years of it, the implication is that this was the greatest artist of his time, that he changed the art of the period significantly, and that without his work Flemish art would not be the same. The rising curve of his fame began with the Florentine ambassador to Brussels, Guicciardini, who praised him⁶¹ while he was still alive, quickly followed by Vasari⁶² and the panegyric from Lampsonius⁶³ followed within a year by an encomium from Ortelius,⁶⁴ and by Van Mander’s misleading

couple of pages in 1604.⁶⁵ By 1610 the Jesuit Carolus Scriani had compared him to Parrhasius of Ephesus,⁶⁶ in 1627 Robert Herrick coupled him with Titian and Tintoretto,⁶⁷ he was celebrated by Félibien in 1666,⁶⁸ eulogised by Sandrart in 1675,⁶⁹ and on and on until, quite suddenly, he became unfashionable in the early 18th century during which Sir Joshua Reynolds decided he did not think much of Bruegel's technique. How are the mighty fallen. "Buffoonery" and "ridiculous" were just two of the comments appended to his name.⁷⁰

Was the birth of academies across Europe coincidental with his fall from grace or was the market simply overwhelmed by pastiche and copies by family members and others? Did any of them ever feel any guilt? If waves of interpretation have crashed over Bosch, then I wonder if Bruegel, commissioned originally to plagiarise his predecessor for the sake of an income, yet also consciously painting in a derivative style, felt splashes of guilt in waves of envy as he worked? And how did that impact those around him? "If one painted more forgeries than one's own paintings, wouldn't the forgeries become more natural, more real, more genuine to oneself, even, than one's own painting? Wouldn't the effort finally go out of it and the work become second nature?"⁷¹ Or for that matter his family and others later emulating, replicating, indiscriminately copying, and slavishly imitating his work in order to maintain 'brand Bruegel'.

From the beginning Bruegel literature "is ridden with mistranslations and false interpretations stemming from insufficient knowledge of the language, literature and dramatic art of the sixteenth-century Netherlands. This has to some extent prevented a proper evaluation of his work."⁷² By the 19th century he would be referred to as 'vulgar', 'coarse', and 'grotesque' by Burckhardt, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, and Henri Hymans who would later add, "his scope is certainly not the broadest, and his ambition is kept within modest bounds".⁷³ Thank goodness for Baudelaire. Calling him 'Bruegel the Joker' he recognised the drive and ambition, criticised the fantasy and caprice with which his pictures were viewed by his contemporaries, and latched on to his genius in 1857.⁷⁴ The artist Eugène Fromentin who wrote *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* about Flemish and Netherlandish art in 1876 mentions Bruegel just in passing as 'the inventor of genre, a genius of the land',⁷⁵ which is both disappointing and sad considering his view that "art is the expression of the invisible by means of the visible" – a suitable phrase for Bruegel. But once Hulin de Loo had visited the 1902 exhibition of Flemish paintings held in Bruges, and called him "the last of the 'gothics' and the first of the 'moderns'... one of the greatest figures in the history of Art"⁷⁶ there was no looking back.⁷⁷ Auden's "About suffering they were never wrong, / The Old Masters: how well they understood"⁷⁸ and Huxley's "he starts on the outside and works inward" built popular reputation⁷⁹ whilst subsequent scholarship has probed in every direction.⁸⁰

Bruegel's ambiguity is often taken as a challenge by those who would pin him down. His faith is questioned, his apparent lack of reverence commented on, the sacred seemingly secularised as the Bible is relocated to Brabant, yet the Middle Ages survived well into his life time: torturing a suspect under interrogation accepted practice, severing a limb an acceptable sentence, and witches burnt at the stake in the United Provinces until the next century. Censorship was rife. However one might camouflage one's attack, an artist would have had to be very careful as to their degree of provocation.

But we should still see the picture as a starting point, and trust the beholders to finish the job. "Before inventing scholarly explanations of subjects which today suggest a rebus or code message, we should ask whether the solution is not actually much simpler than we think."⁸¹ My sentiments exactly. However, whilst Marijnissen believes that the philologists and linguists and rhetoricians hold the key: that can only be a part of the story. As Ortega y Gasset noted, 'remembering is what we do thinking about the future... memories the strength we gather in order to look forward'. Happiness is never much more than the temporary abatement of angst. Looking at his jolly, romping, carousing peasants, how often does Bruegel's audience today

appreciate that he is very serious? “Whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat” was one of the famous sayings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the 19th century anarcho-socialist. Invoking common interest can be a reflection of someone’s wish to realise his own special interest, and I think we may be certain that certain members of the original audiences of Bruegel’s work that I have chosen to highlight would have been uncomfortable. And as they became uncomfortable we can only reflect that when murder can come to be seen as a kind of savage joke, to which the only response is grotesque humour, a reaction that may be no more than magic thinking, a manifestation that the hope that laughter would keep it from happening again, or from happening to the person that laughed.

‘Man thinks, God laughs’ is a fine Jewish proverb. Bruegel found mankind funny to begin with, his own art entering the world as an echo of God’s laughter. But then, if God was still laughing by 1561 the despair and hopelessness of the Netherlands was a sure sign that evil done in His name might well triumph. If mankind was thinking then, the truth certainly escaped them. If God was laughing then, it could only be at mankind’s stupidity, because man is never what he thinks he is. The gravitational pull of the past in his pictures give the strongest sense of uncovering a mystery as we follow Bruegel’s magical thread of connections.

Observing others doomed to cling to a life even while it was unendurable, if Bruegel did waiver in his beliefs, perhaps feeling as many Catholics do today that their church has left them, it may well be that rather than joining an alternative church, he became provoked into defining beliefs as those that prove useful to the believer.

IF THERE IS ONE THING I have learnt whilst working on this book it is that we should see the picture as the starting point, and trust the audience to finish the job. The desire of art critics for over five centuries to ‘solve Bosch’, and to a lesser extent Bruegel, as if they were a puzzle seems to me to be missing the point. The audience completes the task. The artist paints from the premise that the dots can be joined by the beholder, and with the confidence of one who knows that, if they are intelligent, they will complete the painting for him. For us, looking those five centuries later, the artist’s possible relish for ambiguity is taken as a challenge to those who would pin him down. But they are functions of his calling: he paints pictures.

Like a musical score that needs the players to become music, a novel tells the reader only a limited amount, frequently implying as much as it contains, and a play may be viewed as three-dimensional literary criticism, with the actors and a director bringing their talents to bear on a text, a picture may be considered similarly incomplete. The intuitive openness of an artist to interpretation is easily mistaken for complexity. As we confront the supposedly incomprehensible head-on, the superfluity of motives that lie behind a composition can lead academics to theorise to an extent where many may wonder what these people are talking about.

Just as an artist may well surprise himself with his creation once it is finished, so he may well deliberately or unconsciously seem to invite the audience to allow itself to be surprised by what happens when viewing the result. We are searching for clarity, the artist may well be deliberately seeking to mystify and compound. We want explanations, the artist may seek to confound and discombobulate the beholder, just like poetry. He will only stop making sense to his audience when he stops making sense to himself. The problem 500 years later lies within ourselves.

Remember, the painter is a spectator too. Although, of course, he is the first.



276 Jheronimus Bosch *Visions of the Hereafter – Ascent of the Blessed* (detail) Venice, Palazzo Grimani

“One of the reasons I got involved in art was that I wanted an alternative life. I wanted to study my own sensations. It all began when I was travelling around Europe. At the time I wanted to be a painter, but then I saw Las Meninas. Velázquez made it so that the object was subject to change when I stood there. I was an extension of that space, and I didn’t see how I was going to be able to do that in a painting unless I resorted to a mirror.”
Richard Serra⁸²

Centuries apart, my interludes have, I trust, demonstrated that art exists in mutually illuminating adjacencies, part of a single continuous story. It may well be that my natural inclination for collage and collision, for bringing things together in seemingly impossible encounters, has caused friction in the reader. I hope so. My title may convey more than it could possibly deliver. I am with Baxandall who admitted in the 1990s that ‘one writes to irritate partly’. And if I have done my job well then it may cause a few people to look again, and again, at the pictures of Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, to see their echo in the world in which we live.

As Jos Koldeweij commented in his foreword to the expanded edition of Roger Marijnissen and Peter Ruyfelaere’s monumental publication *Hieronymus Bosch. The Complete Works* while “the book presented the status quaestionis of Bosch research in the year of its publication [1987] concerning attributions, interpretations, stylistic questions, theological and literary sources, technical investigation and historiography” the authors would be the first to realise that their book would not be the last word on Bosch. “Time passes, new research methods are adopted, different questions are raised, additional archival and visual sources are brought into the discussion, insights change, and errors or incorrect interpretations are exposed.” Koldeweij called it a Sisyphean task to keep on top of it all.

The ever-expanding corpus of art-historical literature is not confined to Bosch. Despite the lack of information on the life of Bruegel, his training, his opinions, his activities or even his whereabouts during a career of which only parts of the last 17 years are documented, the paintings and designs for prints bridge the pictorial traditions of Flemish primitives with the ‘golden era’ in such an engaging way as to ensure that his early death and rapid fame, coupled with never-ending questions as to his being a moralist, humanist or humourist, alive at the beginning of a tumultuous chapter in the history of the Netherlands, all combine to stimulate myths about the artist and his work that have fuelled his enduring popularity – and a wealth of publications, with several systematic catalogues appearing as I have been writing this book.

Jousting over interpretation never ends. We shall never be finished with Bosch and Bruegel. I can think of no greater praise of their legacy than that.⁸³

"Art cannot exist before it is interpreted."

"Things happen out of the corner of your eye when you are striving for something else"

Grayson Perry⁸⁴

"A great artist can make art by simply casting a glance" Robert Smithson

IN MY FIRST interlude I noted that "history at its most basic requires two things, first for something to happen, and second for someone to tell the story." However, where there is a story there also needs to be a resolution. Having started on a journey, whether literally on a pilgrimage, or metaphorically in the pilgrimage of life, or even an inward, spiritual journey, 'a pilgrimage of the imagination' – drama unfolds, obstacles are overcome, and conflicts should be resolved. The question therefore cannot be dodged, where is the resolution in a painting? One might argue that just as nobody writes except to be read, no artist paints except to be seen; hence the resolution may be there when a painting is hung? In an era of oral tradition, when pictures were a principal form of communication, the triptych literally unfolded a story in one continuous narrative, 'the reality of the altarpiece was the reality of the liturgy'. But paintings that told incomplete stories demanded that their resolution was to be found in the viewer, inside ourselves. The drama was in us, meditation an act richly endowed with indulgences, as the spectator participates in the scene, usually Christ's Passion. But as the harrowing, grisly imagery of Christ's persecution intensified, the end of the world came nearer, and the devotional nature of pictures grew less, in a world blind to Christianity, judgement was at hand, unforgiving, inevitable, and final. The questions posed by Bosch were uncomfortable, unpleasant, and difficult to answer, the end of the story too frightening to contemplate.

Christianity was a universal moral code that gave a sense of identity to its followers, nevertheless, where Bosch had a pervasive sense of what was in store for mankind, Bruegel had a pervasive sense of loss, what might have been, and at the same time, what was tearing his homeland apart. By the time of Bruegel, the story had moved on. False trails and shadow plots lead his story, full of jostling possibilities and competing outcomes, as we trace the mad energy of the last few years of his life. With his range, his invention, and his universality marking him out, his stories fed directly into the bloodstream of the nation, making his audience feel he was a personal friend of each of them. He understood and shared the lives of his countrymen.

"Regarding the pain of others requires more than just a pair of eyes. It necessitates an act of the imagination: a willingness to think or feel oneself into the interior of another's experience."⁸⁵ Exploring empathetic borderlands and crossing those frontiers can be difficult and dangerous. We are living in the middle of an empathy craze.⁸⁶ There are shelf-loads of books about it. Being sensitive to the sufferings of others, in tune with their perspective, may motivate us to make compassionate moral judgements, but does not necessarily motivate us to take moral action, to make a stand. Stories are told of extermination camps where the guards cried as they killed women and children for the first time.

But they got over it. Empathy is a fragile flower, easily crushed, a shortcut to emotion without confronting our own weakness, a way to experience the illusion of moral progress without the difficulty of making moral judgements.

In a conversation with Jesus, Nicodemus attempted to learn how he might tune into His perspective on life. In one of the most well-known and misused sound bites of his career, Jesus told him: 'you must be born again'.⁸⁷ In telling him this, Jesus was saying, you need to look at the world with new eyes, view it from a different perspective, because only that way will you see the presence of God. The phrase had an exploratory, encouraging and life-giving tone, rather than the term of judgement many give it today as they test or question one's religious credentials. Bruegel encouraged people to look again, to reconsider, to scrutinise and check the

stories he put before his audience, in order that they too might gain a different interpretation of them, and perhaps consider a new road on their journey in faith. He did not take the fork signposted Reform, but he certainly was at that junction, considering which direction to take, when he died. In the Middle Ages hawkers would sell lead-alloy badges to travellers in order that they could show they had reached their destination.⁸⁸ The paintings of Bruegel are like the refuges along that pilgrim road. 'The road not taken' might be his epitaph.⁸⁹

With both artists the viewer ends the story, forced to resolve the dilemmas and personal conflicts with which they are confronted. For Bosch, there is as much delight in the start of a pilgrimage as in its conclusion, with a spiritual audit, continuously moral stocktaking along the way. But for Bruegel, who died at just 44, it may seem the journey not the arrival mattered, "one's destination never a place, but a new way of seeing things".⁹⁰ "Art cannot exist before it is interpreted."⁹¹

The hazards of interpretation are right here on this page: Henry Miller, Robert Frost, and Jesus Christ; three quotes, the first misquoted, the second misunderstood, and the third misused, all are consistently misinterpreted. "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by." For those that made the journey with them, perhaps unaware of their destination, their minds surely broadened, their conversations doubtless lengthened, their travel bags filled with more memories than they could remember, both Bosch and Bruegel painted to bring people together, using their gifts for visual communication to build up communion by sharing intimate thoughts and feelings, and community, putting their God-given gift at the service of their God. The 20th century monk Thomas Merton suggested that 'happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order, rhythm and harmony' but for these artists those qualities merely serviced the intensity of their feelings.

- 1 Photography is not permitted. As art galleries have embraced new technology with enthusiasm, scared of seeming out-of-touch, they have become a branch of social networking sites, visitors snap away with mobile phones while just a few stay to focus, documenting rather than experiencing, the photograph their souvenir, as looking becomes a memory before it has even begun. As guards try to enforce rules that are unenforceable and the public increasingly ignores them, convinced of their rights in the pursuit of a photo, we might consider two comments: Walter Benjamin considered cameras were instruments of distraction, whereas the photographer Dorothea Lange believed 'the camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera'. Thus we may not really look at the pictures as we try to find the best view for a 'selfie' and we might increase visual literacy. As the art critic Deborah Solomon put it on WNYC radio, "A photograph of a painting can no more destroy a masterpiece than it can create one." We can debate that one. Try telling the guards in the Sistine Chapel. The world of apps has the gallery world in its embrace. Visitors consult their screens, swipe, tap and navigate their way through space, tagging a thumbnail image, uploading a minimal textbite, all the time listening to an audio-guide that forces them along a rigid unswerving path from which, if they are lucky, they might glimpse something else, only to be frustrated by an instruction to move on. Useful as it is we can get lost in the gadgetry. If we cannot get there at all, it will be possible in future to visit museums by night via high-tech tour guides, robots roaming the empty galleries at the whim of digital technology, the public simply logging on and controlling these mechanical sightlines from anywhere in the world. Tate began broadcasting 'After Dark' tours in 2014. Meanwhile, the National Gallery gave up trying to stop visitors photographing themselves in front of the pictures, surrendering to the power of social networking and the 'selfie', except for displays with copyright issues. Photography is now permitted.
- 2 Donald Preziosi *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* 1998 p21
- 3 Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* 1978 transl G Bennington and I McLeod
- 4 Donald Preziosi *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* 1998 p397
- 5 Alberto Martinengo (ed) *Beyond Deconstruction: From Hermeneutics to Reconstruction* transl Wilson Kaiser 2012 p3
- 6 Francis Haskell would later write of his own work falling "halfway between History and Art History" *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* 1963 pxix
- 7 Heinrich Wölfflin *Principles of Art History* 1915, 1950 ed p11
- 8 Kenneth Clark *The Other Half: A Self-Portrait* 1977 p7. Susie Nash has pointed out Panofsky's "manipulation, even fabrication, of authoritative-sounding Latin sources" in her essay 'Erwin Panofsky: Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character, 1953' *The Books That Shaped Art History* Richard Shone and John-Paul Stonard (eds) 2013 p101. Aby Warburg left unfinished his 'image atlas' of art history, the *Mnemosyne Atlas: a picture series examining the function of preconditioned antiquity-related expressive values for the presentation of eventful life in the Art of the European Renaissance visual clusters put together 1924-9*.
- 9 John Burrow *A History of Histories* 2007 p450 "He regards thinking in images and personifications as particularly characteristic of his period, developed and systematized to the point of decadence... the world was seen as a highly structured hierarchy of symbolic meanings, in which colours, plants and flowers, animals, minerals, planets, biblical stories and the ordering of society all play parts and constantly evoke each other and the moral qualities with which they are associated. Resemblances, of any kind, constitute symbolic connections; it is a world not so much of causality as of correspondences, which relate objects in this way rather than, as a later world of thought would relate them, taxonomically and causally."
- 10 Hans Belting *Art History After Modernism* 2003 p164
- 11 Huizinga challenged Burckhardt's clear distinction between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. See *The Development of the Individual - Personality* Part II of Burckhardt's 19th century epic of the Italian Renaissance, a spark that helped ignite art history as an academic subject *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* 1860, 1990 ed p98 "In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness – that which was turned within as that which was turned without – lay dreaming or half-awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues."
- 12 James Rosenquist *Painting Below Zero* 2009 p3 "Painting has everything to do with memory. Images of the unexpected, the surreal, well up unbidden in your mind – as do things you haven't resolved."
- 13 Henry David Thoreau *Journal* 5 August 1851. He made a number of diary entries about observation. On 13 September 1852 "Carlyle said how to observe was to look, but I say it is rather to see, and the more you look the less you will observe"; 6 May 1854 "There is no such thing as pure objective observation. Your observation, to be interesting, ie to be significant, must be subjective" and 2 July 1857 "Many an object is not seen, though it falls within the range of our visual ray, because it does not come within the range of our intellectual ray, ie we are not looking for it. So, in the largest sense, we find only the world we look for" all from *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau* 1906
- 14 Patrick H Hutton 'The Art of Memory Reconceived: From Rhetoric to Psychoanalysis' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1987 p371
- 15 Frances Yates *The Art of Memory* 1966 pp2-36. Written in close consultation with Gertrud Bing, Yates work was greeted with considerable skepticism but it did highlight the importance of early modern mnemonics, before the art of memory underwent a true renaissance with the knowledge retrieval systems of modern technology that we all carry.
- 16 See Chapter 5 The Spirit of the Age II. This ties back to the world of Giordano Bruno and others who searched for the hidden structure of the universe in Hermes Trismegistus, the famous memory wheel of Bruno (published in *De Umbris Idearum* 1582) and its supposed insights into the structural unity of all knowledge of Heaven and earth. The wheel worked by magic. See Yates pp129-59, 199-230. Also Yates *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* 1964.
- 17 Johan Huizinga *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays* transl Werner Kaegi 1968 pp240-3
- 18 Johan Huizinga *The Waning of the Middle Ages* transl F Hopmann 1955 p233. This is from Chapter 19 'Art and Life'. In the new version *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* transl Rodney J Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch 1996 this becomes Chapter 12 'Art in Life' see pp294-5
- 19 Francis Haskell *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* 1993 ch 10 'Michelet' with reference to his outstanding history of France in the 19th century that ran to 23 volumes (1833-67) of romantic, declamatory prose. He loved the folk elements of the Revolution; dancing, singing, street theatre, and carnival. "To know the life of the people, their toils and sufferings, I had but to interrogate my memory" his spark derived from reminiscences of his youth. He would also declare: "God has given me in History the means of participating in everything."
- 20 With its definition of "A fifteenth-century painting [as] the deposit of a social relationship" and the further recruitment of geological terms (nb Wölfflin's vision of art history also implied geological metaphors, eg optical strata) to describe the relationship between society and paintings, such as "economic practices of the period are quite concretely embodied in the paintings... paintings are among other things fossils of economic life" Michael Baxandall led some to embrace the idea of a social history of art rather than the element of 'pictorial style' which was the heart of his argument. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* 1972 pp1-2 was nevertheless addressed "to people with a general historical curiosity about the renaissance rather than to people just interested in Renaissance painting." The book has no modern references. He later made the entertaining comment in *Shadows and Enlightenment* 1995 that "art history was choked with repetitious bibliographies."
- 21 Paul Hills 'Michael Baxandall' *The Books that Shaped Art History* ed Richard Shone and John-Paul Stonard 2013 p155, originally published

in *The Burlington Magazine*.

- 22 Michael Baxandall *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* 1972 pp27
- 23 The list of scholars who have pursued the Middle Dutch highway to Bosch continues to grow: Dirk Bax, Father Gerlach, Eric De Bruyn, Walter Gibson, Jan Grauls, Paul De Keyser, Louis Lebeer, Roger Marijnissen, James Marrow, Domien Roggen, Larry Silver, HW Steemers, JK Steppe, Paul Vandenbroeck, Irving Zupnick et al.
- 24 Reindert Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 pp272-3 "... it needs to be said that my interpretation almost necessitates not only some kind of advisorship of one or more insiders at the Burgundian court, but also the painter's access to a group of texts and images that, as a group, would only exist in this courtly environment."
- 25 Michael Baxandall *Patterns of Intention* 1985 p105
- 26 Michael Ann Holly 'Patterns in the Shadows' *About Michael Baxandall* 1999 p14, with reference to Michael Baxandall *Patterns of Intention* 1985 p42, and *ibid* p6 quoting Panofsky 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' *Meaning in the Visual Arts* 1955 p24
- 27 St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica: Treatise on the Cardinal Virtues, q82 Of Devotion* (four articles)
- 28 *St Augustine On the Holy Trinity XIV* 1 argues that the right use of reason is "that by which the most wholesome faith is begotten... is nourished, defended, and made strong" – principles that were proposed by Aquinas.
- 29 St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* 1/1, 35
- 30 Jacob Burckhardt *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* 1867 transl SGC Middlemore 1990 p4
- 31 Claude Lévi-Strauss *La Pensée sauvage* 1962 transl *The Savage Mind* 1966 p22
- 32 Arthur C Danto *What Art Is* 2013 all quotes in the paragraph come from the Preface
- 33 W H Auden *The Dyer's Hand and other essays* 1962 here using 'canvas' as a generic term that we may equally interpret as panels.
- 34 Donald Preziosi *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* 1998 p23
- 35 Hans Belting *Art History After Modernism* 2003 p137
- 36 Hans Belting *Art History After Modernism* 2003 p144
- 37 Heinrich Wölfflin *Principles of Art History* 1950 p17
- 38 David Summers 'Form', Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description' *Critical Enquiry* 15 Winter 1989 pp372-93
- 39 Roger Fry review of 'Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe' *The Burlington Magazine* September 1921 vol39 pp145-8
- 40 Herbert Read 'Introduction' to Heinrich Wölfflin *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance* 1952 pvii
- 41 *ibid* pviii
- 42 Heinrich Wölfflin *Principles of Art History* Preface to the sixth edition 1922, 1950 ed pvii
- 43 Michael Ann Holly *Panofsky and the Foundation of Art History* 1984 pp46-68, and Erwin Panofsky *Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst* from *Aufsatz zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft* ed H Oberer and E Veerheyen 1980 pp19-27
- 44 Erwin Panofsky *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* 1953. The Spanish Civil War kept him from Madrid. We can only envy his eye, and his memory: nevertheless, whilst there was nothing unimaginative, uninspired or outmoded about the scholarship, and he wrote memorable prose, his overarching thesis about the nature and development of Early Netherlandish painting, its integration of subject matter and iconology, origins and character, style, knowledge, and tradition, debates about attribution, and integration of artists into schools and his ideas of development and progress, with the narrative of increasing naturalism, of conquering space, teleological progression of artist's biographies, links between artists physically and spiritually, all made with remarkable analytic methodology. 'Big Flemish book' – Erwin Panofsky *Korrespondenz* IV, 1514 pp254-56 letter to Gregor Paulson, May 1953.
- 45 Erwin Panofsky *Iconography and Iconology: an introduction to the study of Renaissance art* reprinted in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* 1955 p32
- 46 Larry Silver 'The State of Research in Northern European Art of the Renaissance Era' *The Art Bulletin* vol68/4 p519
- 47 Christopher S Wood 'EH Gombrich. Art and Illusion: A study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, 1960' *The Books That Shaped Art History* ed Richard Shone and John-Paul Stonard 2013 p118
- 48 St Jerome is always an image of hope. Even when apparently threatened by a "monstrous skull, crowned by a web of thorny twigs" as in the Bosch painting in Ghent, where Jerome clings to a crucifix and thus to his faith in order to survive the threat of evil. Falkenburg's imaginary Hell-cave-skull-mouth hovers, as the author admits, "between 'seeing' and 'seeing'" in order to engage the viewer, to give them "an active role" in the picture, to 'see into the image forms that are there or not there' to make them think about St Jerome and the nature of their own beliefs; Reindert Falkenburg *The Land of Unlikeness* 2011 pp45-6
- 49 Charles de Tolnay *Hieronymus Bosch* 1966 p10
- 50 For the reception of Bosch in Spain: Almudena Pérez de Tudela *Acceptance of Bosch's works by courtiers during the reign of Philip II: some new examples* 2012
- 51 'mania for interpretation' – Roger Marijnissen with Peter Ruyffelaere *Hieronymus Bosch. The Complete Works* 2007 p46 commenting on Bax *Hieronymus Bosch his picture-writing deciphered* 1949 transl MA Bax-Botha 1979
- 52 *By the Book: Clive James* online *Herald Tribune* 11 April 2013 *New York Times Sunday Book Review* 14 April 2013
- 53 Examples may be found in Fritz Koreny, Gabriele Bartz and Erwin Pokorny *Hieronymus Bosch. Die Zeichnungen. Werkstatt und Nachfolge bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts* Catalogue raisonné 2012, and Ron Spronk *Eigenhandig?* 2011 his inaugural lecture at Radboud University Nijmegen 2010
- 54 Inscription on *Ecce Homo with Donors* at the Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt – *Salva nos, xpe R[e]de[m]ptor* 'save us Christ the redeemer'.
- 55 Marijnissen with Peter Ruyffelaere *Hieronymus Bosch. The Complete Works* 2007 p371
- 56 St Augustine *City of God* Book XI ch21. This is the beginning of the second part of the work dealing with the origin, history, and destiny of the earthly and heavenly cities; how the two were formed by the separation of good and bad angels, and also the creation of the world as described in Genesis. The quote continues with reference to James 1:17 "every best gift is from above... with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" a reflection on the benefit of tribulations and how God is the author of all good things: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation... Let no man when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils" (1:12-13)
- 57 Erwin Panofsky *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* 1953 took his reference from St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I qu I art 9 c – "*spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium*" corporeal metaphors of things spiritual; "*per huiusmodi divina magis occultantur indignis*" is from the Summa 1/1.37
- 58 Hans Blumenberg *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* 1960 transl Robert Savage 2010 p45
- 59 Erwin Panofsky *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*

1953 quoted by Marijnissen & Ruyffelaere Bosch 2007 p32

- 60 attributed to Carl F H Henry (1913-2003) an evangelical Christian theologian, and editor of *Christianity Today*

- 61 Lodovico Guicciardini *Descrittione [...] di tutti I Paesi Bassi* 1567 (Description of All the Low Countries) "a second Jheronimus Bosch..."

- 62 Giorgio Vasari *Lives* 1568 second definitive ed1550-1567, the chapter *Di diversi artifice fiamminghi* (On Several Flemish Artists) "Pietro Brueghel d'Anversa, maestro eccellente" (Pieter Bruegel of Antwerp, an excellent master)

- 63 Dominicus Lampsonius *Effigies of the Famous* 1572 "Who is this new Jheronimus Bosch... you deserve from all quarters and from all people praise and rewards in no way inferior to those granted to any other artist."

- 64 Abraham Ortelius *Album Amicorum* c1573 "No one will ever deny that Pieter Bruegel was the most accomplished painter of the century – unless they are jealous, a competitor, or ignorant of art."

- 65 Karel van Mander *Schilderboek* 1604

- 66 Carolus Scriani *Antverpia* 1610 "non erit inferior Petrus Bruegelius"

- 67 Robert Herrick *To his Nephew, to be Prosperous in His Art of Painting in Hesperides*, a poem written during a visit to the Ile de Ré in 1627 while acting as chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham

- 68 André Félibien *Entretiens* 1666 (Conversations) "the old Brugle, of whom you have heard so much"

- 69 Joachim von Sandrart *Teutsche Academie* 1675 "the skilful and exact way he depicts everything with a brush, as well as his own inventions. He was regarded as outstanding in the arrangement of his figures and the attractiveness of his pen drawings." Cited in Hans-Wolfgang von Löhneysen *Die Ältere Niederländische Malerei. Künstler und Kritiker* 1956 p148

- 70 Arnold Houbraken *Groote Schouwburg* 1718 "buffoonery" and Antonio Orlandi *Abecedario Pittorico* 1719 "burlesque and ridiculous" – references from Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones *Pieter Bruegel* 1997/2002 p307

- 71 Patricia Highsmith *Ripley Underground* 1970 p20

- 72 R H Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p25

- 73 Henri Hymans 'Pierre Breughel le Vieux' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* V 1891 p20 reprinted in *Oeuvres* III 1920

- 74 Charles Baudelaire *Oeuvres complètes* 1961 pp1022-24

- 75 Eugène Fromentin *Oeuvres complètes* 1984 p580

- 76 Following the 1902 exhibition in Bruges *Exposition de tableaux flamands des XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles* Georges Hulin de Loo produced his own catalogue critique, particularly with regards some of the attributions, and see also René van Bastelaer, Georges Hulin de Loo *Peter Bruegel l'Ancien, son Oeuvre et son Temps. Etude Historiques Suivie des Catalogues Raisonnés* 1907.

- 77 Max Dvorak (1928) Gustav Glück (pubs 1930-1963) Charles de Tolnay (1935, 1937, 1963) Fritz Grossman (1952-1973) Max Friedländer (1921 and the final volume in 1937 of *Altniederländische Malerei*)

- 78 W H Auden *Musée des Beaux Arts* 1939 from *W H Auden. A selection by the author* 1958 p61

- 79 Aldous Huxley *Breughel* 1939 from *Collected Essays* 1958 pp139-43

- 80 Just a few examples: Mark Meadow on the practice of rhetoric, Matt Kavalier on folklore and fables, Margaret Sullivan on contemporary liberal views, Walter Gibson and the art of laughter, Margaret Carroll and Irving Zupnick on politics, Hans J van Miegroet, Annette de

Vries and Reindert Falkenburg on *The Months*, Odilia Bonebakker on tüchlein, Peter van den Brink on the market, Todd Richardson on discourse, Christina Currie and Dominique Allart on working practice, techniques and copying.

- 81 R H Marijnissen *Bruegel* 1984 p25

- 82 Richard Serra interviewed by Dan Duray for *The New York Observer* 15 April 2013 to coincide with the opening of *Richard Serra: Early Work* at David Zwirner, W 20th Street in Chelsea. In December 2013 *Vanity Fair* approached "100 art-world worthies" to ask them who they thought was the greatest living artist. 'The winner' was Gerhard Richter. Richard Serra voted for himself.

- 83 A paraphrase of Paul Valéry's concluding flourish on Stendhal.

- 84 Grayson Perry delivered the Reith Lectures in 2013. Asked after his first lecture to choose any painting that he would wish to own regardless of cost, he said "Bruegel's Procession to Calvary[sic]; that's the best one I think."

- 85 Olivia Laing reviewing *The Empathy Exams* essays by Leslie Jamison 8 April 2014 *International New York Times*

- 86 See Steven Pinker *The Better Angels of Our Nature* 2011

- 87 Gospel According to St John 3:1-7 – "you must be born again"

- 88 Today a visit to the museum gift shop has become a part of art's pilgrimage. Yet just as one may visit the shop without seeing the exhibition, so these badges showed a pilgrim's attendance at, but did not constitute proof of, undertaking a pilgrimage.

- 89 *The Road Not Taken* Robert Frost, frequently misinterpreted as a moral tale in which the traveller takes responsibility for his own destiny, something that would be suitable for the new man in a new age, nevertheless a morality tale that poses a series of difficulties, including the detail neither road was more or less travelled.

- 90 "The journey not the arrival..." is a quote from T S Eliot. And a regular misquote of Henry Miller *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* p25 "One's destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things."

- 91 The nearest thing to a Post-Modern manifesto was found among the unpublished papers of Jacques Derrida after his death in 2004. Written with Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault and also signed by Jean-François Lyotard and Giovanni Papini, the 13 point document that, despite its literary-philosophical origins, begins and ends with art: "1 The art of the past is the past. What was true of art yesterday is false today . . .

12 To the postmodernist every work of art is a text, even if it employs no words and has no title, to be curatorially interpreted. Art cannot exist before it is interpreted.

13 Postmodernist interpretation depends on coining new words unknown and unknowable to the masses, on developing a critical jargon of impenetrable profundity, and on a quagmire of theory with which to reinforce endowed significance. Vive le Néologisme!" The translation is Brian Sewell's from a copy of the original given to him in February 2006 by a postgraduate student at the Courtauld. Sewell went on to comment on the inauguration of a Tate appointment – "the much mocked curator of interpretation".

Epilogue – beginning and ending with death in Venice

*“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from”¹*

I AM IN VENICE. It is June 2007. I am here to see the Bosch paintings in the Palazzo Ducale, an exhibition of printing history in the Palazzo Correr and to give moral support to Alex who is engaged in an event at the British Pavilion in the Giardini. It is Biennale year, the Ascot of the art world, and the art world’s trade fair, something for that exclusive club of frequent flyers, the privileged diaspora, the global intelligentsia, those enlightened exiles seeking art’s next big thing. At the Doge’s Palace I am in for a disappointment. Despite careful checking before setting out, not all the Bosch paintings are on display. *The Hermit Saints* and the *Crucified Female Martyr* are there, but the two diptychs (the *Fall of the Damned* and *Hell* together with *Earthly Paradise* and the *Ascent of the Blessed* that relates to a *Last Judgement* in Vienna that I am particularly interested in) are away being restored. Perhaps because of this, I keep thinking about Bosch’s unprecedented image of death more and more.

The theme of death keeps recurring. I feel as if I have come full circle. The age of Jheronimus Bosch was obsessed with death and apocalyptic visions of the hereafter. Today, technology can turn existence into hell; for Pieter Bruegel the Elder, simply existing in the Spanish Netherlands was hell. A red banner alongside the entrance to the Giardini proclaims that “the Biennale has position on conflict and no part in it” [sic] signed Robert Storr. But it does. His selection is one of the most political I can ever remember. Every two years Venice, a city that is itself a work of art, a romantic vision living on the edge of its catastrophe that casts its potent spell, a city that Jan Morris called ‘unreconcilable with the modern world’, a place where past and present are interwoven more than most, becomes a city of artistic engagement and secular exchanges. The language of art today is very exclusive. I decide to go and listen to some of it.

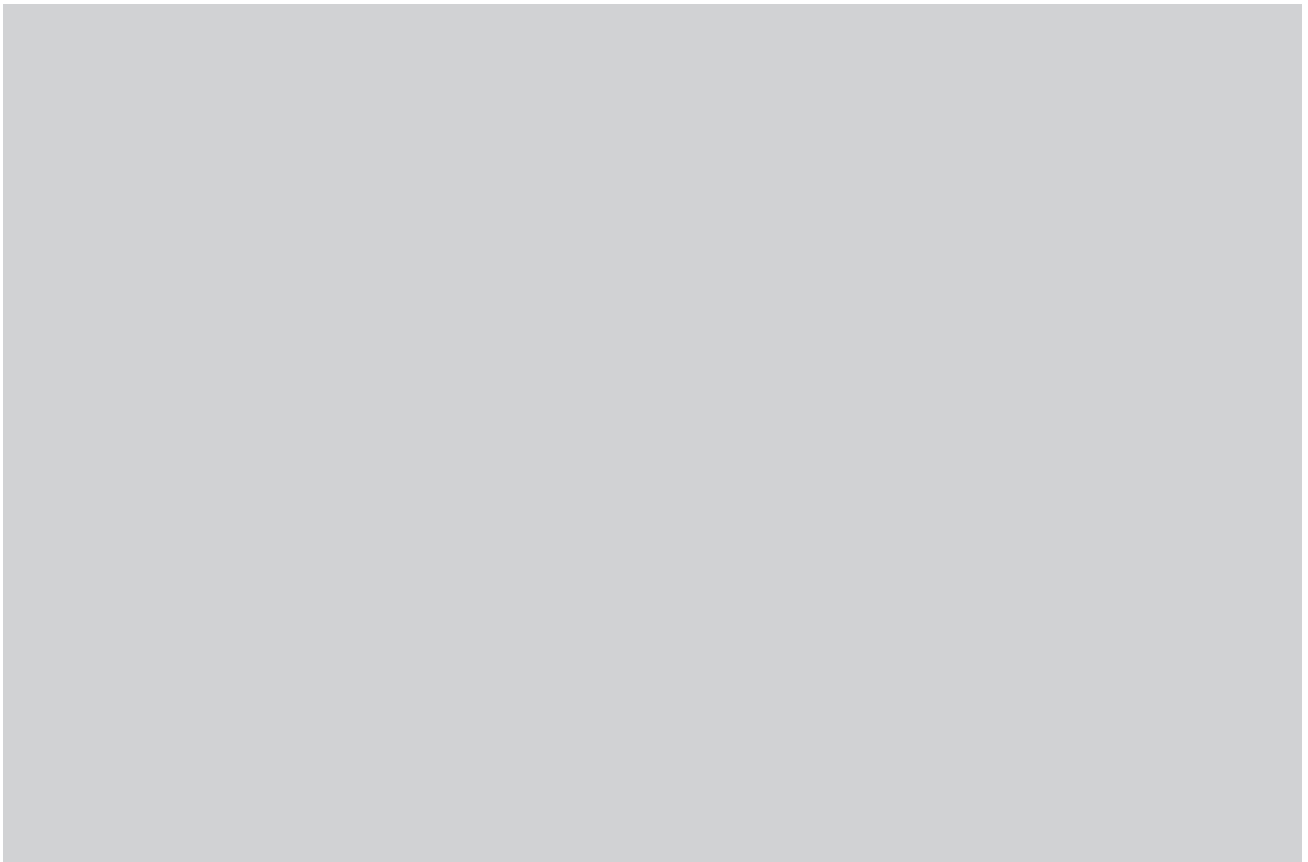
So much of the Venice Biennale is self-referencing, what was here before, how does it compare with the last show or another show, one of the hundred or more biennales that now exist around the world. Venice however, is not just food for thought, it’s a feast. The next day at Venice Agendas, a breakfast debate between curators and critics, Robert Storr, that year’s director of the Biennale and the first American ever to be responsible for the event, is speaking about his choices to exhibit. This artistic Olympics takes itself very seriously. One has to keep one’s sense of humour but it is not easy.

Sunday afternoon 5pm. The sun is shining, it’s very hot and the bells of San Marco are ringing out to mark the hour. Another red banner. This one is unfurled from the campanile. Blowing in the wind it is hard to read the highly compacted sans serif lettering but it ends “. . . IF I DONT I WILL KILL MYSELF”. The flag of Venice, the golden lion on a burgundy ground, is blowing at 90 degrees to its flagpole in front of the cathedral, but the text banner becomes more and more twisted as it refuses to do what the demonstrator wishes. Few of the hundreds of people in the square are paying any attention. Act one, scene one, afternoon tea. The pigeons are looking around outside the windows of the Caffé dell’arte in the Correr which is my vantage point on the scene. Music filters through the full height french windows by our table as the quartet at Florians struggle through ‘My Way’. The banner twists and turns in the wind for half an hour. It is still indecipherable.

Death in the afternoon? Death in Venice? It seems to be the theme of the artwork in Venice from Bosch to Bill Viola, Baselitz to the British Pavilion. But mercifully Jang Gansu,

owner of the illegible banner, is prevented from taking the theme further by the eventual arrival of officers from the Carabinieri who arrest him – but not “within seconds” as the papers reported the following day.

The excitement over, I decide it is time to leave, catch the sleeper back to Paris and start this book. The canals are full of traffic, as busy as ever, like so many unconnected thoughts in an art historian’s brain. Hazy light, shifting waters, a line of geese passing overhead, silhouetted against some high cirrus, heading out towards the open sea; a bloated sun subsides into the smog over towards Marghera. Some private Charon ferries a signora in the direction of the station while I wait for the vaporetto. Tomorrow I would have to begin.



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1 TS Eliot 1942 *Little Gidding V* (the last of the *Four Quartets*)

List of works

Jheronimus Bosch as attributed by a majority of scholars

The Adoration of the Magi (The Epiphany) / The Mass of St Gregory Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Allegory of Gluttony Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven
Christ Carrying the Cross Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial
Christ Carrying the Cross Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent
Christ Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns) National Gallery, London
Christ Carrying the Cross (The Ascent to Calvary) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Christ Child (Child with Walker and Whirligig) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Crucifixion (Calvary with Donor) KMSK, Brussels
The Crucified Female Martyr Palazzo Ducale, Venice
Death and the Usurer (Death of a Miser) National Gallery of Art, Washington
The Conjuror Musée Municipal, St Germain-en-Laye
Ecce Homo with Donors Städtisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt
The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ears Kupferstichkabinett Berlin
The Flood and Hell Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
The Garden of Earthly Delights / The Creation of the World Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
The Haywain / The Wayfarer Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
The Haywain / The Wayfarer Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial
The Hermit Saints Palazzo Ducale, Venice
The Last Judgement / St James and St Bavo Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna
Owl's Nest Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
The Pedlar (The Prodigal Son, The Wayfarer) Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam
St Jerome at Prayer Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent
St John the Baptist in the Wilderness Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid
St John the Evangelist on Patmos / Passion Scenes Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
The Ship of Fools Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Tribulations (The Temptation) of St Antony / The Passion of Christ Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon
Visions of the Afterlife (Visions of the Hereafter) Palazzo Grimani, Venice

Disputed by a majority of scholars

The Adoration of the Magi Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Christ Carrying the Cross (drawing) Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Christ Before Pilate Princeton University Art Museum
Christ Mocked (Christ Crowned with Thorns) Palacio Real de San Lorenzo de El Escorial
Christ Crowned with Thorns Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, Valencia
The Conjuror Musée Municipal, St-Germain-en-Laye
The Cure of Folly (The Extraction of the Stone, The Cutting of the Stone) Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Death of a Miser Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Deposition (The Entombment) The British Museum, London
Sketch with Monsters (Figures) Ashmolean, Oxford
Sketch for a St Anthony Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin
Studies for St Anthony and monsters Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Last Judgement / Christ Crowned with Thorns Groeningemuseum, Bruges
The Last Judgement (fragment) Alte Pinakothek, Munich
The Hell Ship Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna
The Ship of Fools (drawing) Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Temptation of St Anthony (St Anthony) Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
The Tree-Man (drawing) Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
Witches (drawing) Musée du Louvre, Paris

Pieter Bruegel the Elder

The Adoration of the Magi National Gallery, London
The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow Sammlung Oskar Reinhart 'am Römerholz', Winterthur
The Alchemist Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
The Battle Between Carnival and Lent Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Big Fish Eat Little Fish Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
The Census at Bethlehem Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
Children's Games Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Christ and the Adulteress (Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery) Courtauld Gallery, London
Cockaigne (The Land of Cockaigne) Alte Pinakothek, Munich
The Conversion of Saul Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Cow Pasture before a Farmhouse (Pastoral Landscape with a Farm and a Windmill) National Gallery of Art, Washington
The Cripples (The Beggars) Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Death of the Virgin Upton House, Banbury
The Descent of Christ into Limbo Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
The Dirty Bride (The Wedding of Mopsus and Nisa) Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Dulle Griet Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp
The Fall of the Magician Homogenes Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The Fall of the Rebel Angels / The Archangel Michael Slaying the Apocalyptic Dragon KMSK, Brussels
The Flight into Egypt Courtauld Gallery, London
Gloomy Day Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
The Harvesters (The Grain Harvest) Metropolitan Museum, New York
Haymaking (The Hay Harvest) Roudnice Lobkowicz Collection, Nelahozeves
Hilly Landscape with Three Pilgrims Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.
Hunters in the Snow (The Return of the Hunters, Winter) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Italian Landscape / Landscape with Castle Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Landscape with Fortified City (Landscape with Fortified Town) The British Museum, London
Landscape with St Jerome National Gallery of Art, Washington
The Last Judgement Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
The Magpie on the Gallows Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
The Massacre of the Innocents The Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace
The Misanthrope (The Misanthropist) Museo Nazionale di Capodmonte, Naples
Mountain Landscape with River and Travellers The British Museum, London
Mountain Landscape with Ridge and Valley Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig
Mule Caravan on a Hillside Musée du Louvre, Paris
Netherlandish Proverbs (The Proverbs) Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
The Painter and the Connoisseur Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
Parable of the Blind Museo Nazionale di Capodmonte, Naples
Peasant Wedding (Peasant Wedding Feast, Wedding Banquet) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
The Procession to Calvary (Christ Carrying the Cross) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Rest on the Flight into Egypt Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
The Resurrection of Christ Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Return of the Herd Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
The Sermon of St John the Baptist (The Preaching) Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest
The Seven Deadly Sins (The Vices)
Avarice The British Museum, London
Envy Private collection, Switzerland
Gluttony Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris
Lust (Luxuria) Prentenkabinet/cabinet des Estampes, KBB, Brussels
Pride Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris
Sloth Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
Wrath (Ira, Anger) Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
Skaters before the Gate of St George Private Collection
The Suicide of Saul in the Battle against the Philistines at Gilboa Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Spring Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
Summer Kupferstichkabinett, Kunsthalle Hamburg
The Temptation of St Anthony Ashmolean, Oxford
The Tower of Babel Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
The Tower of Babel Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
The Triumph of Death Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Two Monkeys Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
View of the Ripa Grande Chatsworth House, collection of the Duke of Devonshire and Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement
Village Kermis (Peasants' Dance) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Wedding Dance The Detroit Institute of Arts
Wooded Landscape with a Distant View towards the Sea Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge
The Wine of St Martin's Day Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Winter Landscape with a Bird Trap (... with Skaters) KMSK, Brussels
Wooded Landscape with a Distant View Toward the Sea The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard

Disputed

The Adoration of the Magi Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
The Attack (Peasants' Distress, Peasant Couple Attacked by Robbers) Stockholms Universitets Konstsamling
Christ Carrying the Cross Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
The Damned (The Damned in Hell) Musée du Louvre, Paris
The Journey to Emmaus Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Landscape with the Parable of the Sower Timken Art Gallery, San Diego
The Massacre of the Innocents Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Storm at Sea Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
View of the Bay of Naples Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome
View of Reggio Calabria Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Other artists

Anon *Crucifixion* Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch
Anon *The Fall of Icarus* KMSKB-MRBAB, Brussels
Anon *The Fall of Icarus* Van Buuren Museum, Brussels
Anon *Jeronimus Bos peintre* Bibliothèque Municipale, Arras
Anonymous copy supposedly after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *View of the Straits of Messina* Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels
Anon after Bruegel *Landscape with a Mule Caravan on a Hillside* Munich Staatliche Graphische Sammlung
Francis Bacon *Three studies for figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* Tate Gallery, London
Francis Bacon *Three Studies of Lucian Freud* Christie's, New York
Hans Sebald Behaim *Mediterranean travels of St Paul*

- Dieric Bouts *The Roads to Paradise, The Fall of the Damned* Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille
Dieric Bouts *The Virgin and Child* National Gallery, London
Workshop of Dieric Bouts *Mater Dolorosa* Art Institute, Chicago
Jan Brueghel the Elder
The Triumph of Death Landesmuseum, Graz
Sermon of St John the Baptist Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest
Crucifixion Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Crucifixion Alte Pinakothek, Munich
Pieter Brueghel the Younger with Frans Francken the Younger
Village Landscape with Pilgrims of Emmaus Private collection
Pieter Brueghel the Younger with Joos de Momper the Younger
Crucifixion Philadelphia Museum of Art
Crucifixion Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest
Pieter Brueghel the Younger
Crucifixion Church of St-Séverin, Paris
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Crucifixion KMSKA Antwerp
Massacre of the Innocents Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lons-le-Saunier
Winter Landscape with Skaters and Bird Trap
Pieter Brueghel the Younger or an Unknown Flemish Master
Crucifixion Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch
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Robert Capa *The Falling Soldier 5 September 1936*
Jake and Dinos Chapman
The End of Fun White Cube, London
Hell White Cube, London
Fucking Hell White Cube, London
If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be White Cube, London
Oi Pieter, I k-k-kan see your house from here! (detail) 1607-2010. White Cube, London
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Cornelis Cort *Jheronimus Bosch*
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Flügelaltar mit dem Jüngsten Gericht Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
The Position and Borders of the Promised Land
Lucas Cranach the Elder *Portrait of Martin Luther* Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
Alaert Duhamel *Elephant at War* Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna
Alaert Duhamel *The Last Judgement believed to be based on a lost painting by Bosch*
Dürer *Young Christ Among the Doctors* Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
Dürer's workshop with landscapes by Hans von Kulmbach
Quatuor libri amorum secundum quatuor latera Germanie
Tracey Emin
I Need Art Like I Need God South London Gallery
Everyone I have ever slept with 1963-95 Saatchi Gallery
I've got it all Saatchi Gallery
Erhard Etzlaub *Das ist der Rom Weg*
Philips Galle *Christ and the Disciples on the Way to Emmaus* after a design by Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Artemisia Gentileschi *La Pittura (Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting)*
Girard de Beaulieu Le Roman de la Rose Bibliothèque de Genève, Geneva
Giorgione *The Three Philosophers* Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Leon Golub *Interrogation I* The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica
Leon Golub *Interrogation II* Art Institute, Chicago
Jan Gossaert *Christ on the Cold Stone* Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest
Hand G (attributed to Jan van Eyck) *The Birth of John the Baptist in The Turin-Milan Hours* Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Turin
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Thomas Hoepker *USA. Brooklyn, New York. September 11, 2001*
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Frans Huys, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Naval Battle in the Straits of Messina*
Kennard Phillips *Photo Op* Imperial War Museum North, Manchester
Anselm Kiefer
The Seven Heavenly Palaces Hangar Biocca, Milan
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Himmel-Erde Museo Correr in Venice / private collection
In the beginning (Am Anfang)
Anselm Kiefer *Dat rosa miel apibus* White Cube, London
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Stefan Lochner *Last Judgement* Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne (wings *Martyrdom of the Apostles* Städel Museum, Frankfurt)
Manet *The Execution of Maximilian* National Gallery, London
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Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves *The Hours* The Morgan Library & Museum, New York
Master of St George's Kermis *The Besieging of an Elephant* Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Master of the Harley Froissart *Siege of Constantinople* Bibliothèque nationale de France
Master of St Voul *Le Roman de la Rose* University of Chicago
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- Hans Memling *Virgin and Child with Maarten van Nieuwenbove* Hospitaalmuseum Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges
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St Barbara KMSK, Antwerp
- Hubert and Jan van Eyck *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb / The Ghent Altarpiece* St Bavo Cathedral, Ghent
- Bernaert van Orley *Last Judgement and the Seven Works of Mercy* Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp
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Samenvatting

Kunst als geschiedenis, Geschiedenis als kunst

Jheronimus Bosch en Pieter Bruegel de Oude
kennis vergaren in plaats van raadsels maken

Bosch en Bruegel vergaarden kennis - hun doel was niet raadsels te creëren. Dit boek is een poging om te kijken zoals de direct betrokkenen keken: om beter te begrijpen waarom zij schilderden zoals ze deden. Dit kan worden beschouwd als een speculatief avontuur, maar ik geloof dat de maatschappelijke en politieke motivatie voor hun schilderijen zichtbaar kan worden gemaakt om relevante verbanden tussen feiten te herkennen en te verklaren.

Beide kunstenaars laten in hun schilderijen duidelijk maatschappelijke, economische en politieke elementen doorschemeren die verbazingwekkend vertrouwd zijn maar tegelijk nog maar slecht begrepen worden. Er ligt een maatschappelijke, religieuze en politieke motivatie in hun kunst, kunst die met grote regelmaat is beschreven in een kunsthistorisch isolement. Welvarend, intelligent, en nauw verwant met een geschoold upper-class milieu, was Bosch niet afhankelijk van opdrachtgevers. Hij had de vrijheid om slechts die opdrachten aan te nemen die hem bevielen of die van bijzonder belang voor hem waren; hij kon eenvoudigweg zelf de mensen kiezen voor wie hij wilde werken.

Het tijdsgewricht waarin Bruegel schilderde, was gevaarlijker en de 'tweede Bosch' maakte de scherpe politieke en religieuze tweespalt tot het verholten onderwerp van veel van zijn werken.

Dit wil niet zeggen dat de schilderijen van Bosch en Bruegel mimetisch zijn, directe verbeeldingen van de wereld om hen heen of specifieke afbeeldingen, maar beide schilders vangen iets van de macht en poëzie van hun tijd. Allebei manipuleren ze visueel de vele associaties die wij leggen met hun tijd door de manier waarop zij de drijvende krachten in de wereld om hen heen registreerden. Het historisch kader dat essentieel is om elke kunsthistorische periode te begrijpen is zeker ook voor een onderzoek naar Nederlandse kunst uit de periode 1450-1550 een voorwaarde. Christelijke kunst met het gegroeide gebruik en misbruik van religieuze verbeeldingen was een probleem geworden. Kunst werd meer en meer een visueel commentaar op de eigen tijd en op politieke en religieuze veranderingen: zowel een instrument om ideeën en onderwerpen te formuleren als een medium dat leidt naar verandering van de religieuze verbeelding.

Voor Bosch waren zijn voorstellingen een ethisch spel over het gebrek aan het goede in een wereld die wemelde van kwade monsters. Voor Bruegel vormden ze met regelmaat een zinspeling op politieke gebeurtenissen.

Bosch en Bruegel maakten naar mijn overtuiging zeker geen raadsels, maar vergaarden kennis als onderdeel van een visuele cultuur die essentieel was voor het maatschappelijk leven. Het was meer dan "a popular news map" zoals Svetlana Alpers formuleerde met betrekking tot een latere eeuw. Het gaat hier om het kennisniveau van de wereld in een bepaald tijdvak en met de beleving daarvan door twee kunstenaars. Het reikt van de seksualiteit en spiritualiteit van Bosch tot de wereldse genoegzaamheid bij Bruegel in een tijd van een sociale omwenteling en van een groot keerpunt in de wereldgeschiedenis - het begin van de moderne wereld en het einde van de middeleeuwen.

In hoofdstuk heb ik me geconcentreerd op de achtergrond van het *Laatste Oordeel*, de *Bekeringen van Sint Antonius* en de *Tuin der Lusten* van Jheronimus Bosch, en op de panelen de *Val der Opstandige Engelen*, de *Bekering van Saul*, de *Triomf van de Dood*, de *Processie naar Golgotha*, en de *Moord op de Onnozele Kinderen* van Pieter Bruegel.

In de loop van deze studie stel ik eerder een aantal werkhypotheses voor dan dat ik definitieve conclusies trek, er op vertrouwend dat deze de discussie zullen stimuleren: 1) dat naar alle waarschijnlijkheid (en in tegenspraak met de algemeen geaccepteerde visie) Bosch een reis maakte naar Italië; 2) dat tegen ogenschijnlijk waarschijnlijkheid in Bruegel daarentegen (hoogstwaarschijnlijk) niet naar Italië ging; 3) dat misinterpretaties van de schilderijen van Bosch er toe leidden dat de schilder wordt beschouwd als een pessimist, terwijl hij in zijn werk juist precies het tegenovergestelde lijkt te laten zien; 4) dat de discussie serieus genomen moet worden dat 'Bosch' in feite meer personen zijn en dat zelfs 'zijn' gesigneerde werken door tenminste twee verschillende handen werden geschilderd; 5) dat de *Tuin der Lusten* altijd verkeerd geïnterpreteerd is, en 6) dat de cyclus van de *Seizoenen* van Bruegel met bewaard gebleven schilderijen kan worden vervolledigd. Omdat dit laatste idee door sommigen fel wordt aangevochten, zou ik Albert Einstein willen aanhalen ter

verdediging van mijn these: 'Als het idee in eerste instantie niet absurd is, dan is er hoop voor'.

Het leven van deze twee kunstenaars maakt de overgang van de middeleeuwse naar de moderne wereld, een transitie die in de loop van de tijd verschillend is bekeken. Waren de Middeleeuwen de tijd tussen de Eerste en de Tweede Komst van Christus of is het een interval tussen de ondergang van de Oudheid en de herleving van de antieke cultuur in de Renaissance? Realiseerden Bruegel en zijn tijdgenoten zich dat ze leefden in een nieuwe wereldorde waar middeleeuwse achterlijkheid tot het verleden behoorde, of leek hun eigen wereld ook nog altijd zo barbaars, kneuterig en kwelzachtig als zij de wereld van Bosch beschouwd zullen hebben? Wat betekende de aanslag op het strak geordende Christendom dat de middeleeuwse wereld bij elkaar had gehouden, voor de fysieke, sociale en intellectuele onbeweegelijkheid? Hoe werd verandering toen beschouwd, merkte iemand het op, was het opwindend of angstaanjagend? Wordt iets van die veranderingen weerspiegeld in het werk van Bosch en Bruegel?

Geeft hun werk de geest van de tijd weer of niet? Ik heb altijd gedacht en geloof nog steeds dat kennis van de sociale, politieke en religieuze context essentieel is om te begrijpen wat Bosch en Bruegel schilderden. Zonder dat spartelt het publiek hulpeloos rond in een visuele zee zonder enige navigatie-hulp. Wanneer je niets weet van de geografie van de politieke landkaart en van de dynastieën die deze beheersten, ben je verloren; wanneer je niet begrijpt waardoor Luther gedreven werd, kun je Bruegel niet naar waarde schatten; wanneer je Dante niet hebt gelezen, en de Zwarte Dood en de laat-15de-eeuwse heksenwaan niet begrepen hebt, kun je Bosch niet vatten; wanneer je geen idee hebt van de middeleeuwse Kerk dan kun je er niet in slagen hen beiden te begrijpen.

Om de hel te schilderen, *Gladius domini super terram*, moet je beseffen dat je op dun ijs loopt. Zoals Robert Hughes opmerkte, gold dit motto van Savonarola zeker ook voor Bosch en Bruegel. Beide kunstenaars schilderden immers kwaad en ellende. Dat zou ons niet moeten verbazen. Ze waren getuige van de verschrikkingen van hun tijd, de onmenselijkheid van mensen jegens mensen, vervolgingen, groteske sociale verschillen, godsdienstoorlogen en elkaar bestrijdende krijgsheren, en de dreigende komst van het laatste gevecht tussen goed en slecht, genoeg om elk geloof in humanisme te laten instorten en om elke orde te verstoren die een kunstenaar probeerde op paneel of doek vast te leggen. Bosch en Bruegel verbonden kunst met geschiedenis; zij schilderden wat ze zagen.

Het boek is ingedeeld in negen hoofdstukken. Twee van deze hoofdstukken zijn geconcentreerd op de historische achtergrond. Verspreid door het hele boek zijn persoonlijke intermezzo's geplaatst, *entr'actes* tussen de hoofdstaferelen. Dit zijn bespiegelingen over gebeurtenissen en kunstenaars in onze eigen tijd die als het ware een echo zijn van sommige elementen bij Bosch en Bruegel, wier werk aldus weerklinkt met eigentijdse nagalm. Deze intermezzo's zijn opgenomen om een hedendaags perspectief te geven aan de moeilijkheid om te begrijpen wat het is te leven in hun tijd, om te begrijpen wat hen motiveerde en om de lezer te helpen betrokken te worden in de schilderijen. De tijd van Bosch en Bruegel mag dan totaal verschillend zijn van die van ons, maar bij het registreren van de gebeurtenissen en de kunst van tegenwoordig, vond ik de sporen van het verleden des te duidelijker aanwezig.

In een essay in *The Shape of the Pocket*, "Against the Great Defeat of the World", gebruikt John Berger kunst als een lens waardoor zijn gedachten over kunst en politiek als het ware scherp worden gesteld. Hij begint met *De triomf van de dood* van Bruegel en niet verbazingwekkend brengt hem dat, zoals bij mij, tot de twintigste-eeuwse concentratiekampen. (Ik realiseerde me de kracht van Berger's woorden terwijl ik me verder in mijn onderwerp verdiepte, en dit refrein komt dan ook herhaaldelijk voor.) De wereld waarin we leven en werken kan begrepen worden, zo stelt Berger later voor, via de Hel van de *Tuin der Lusten*, die hij omschrijft als "een vreemde profetie van het geestelijk klimaat neergedaald over de wereld aan het eind van onze (i.e. de 20ste) eeuw door globalisering en de nieuwe economische orde".

Zoals de hel van Bosch is onze wereld er een waarin "er geen rustpunten zijn, geen paden, geen patronen, geen verleden en geen toekomst. Er is slechts het pandemonium van het heterogene, gefragmenteerde heden". En vervolgens, intrigerend, "De verzetshandeling betekent niet alleen de weigering om de absurditeit te accepteren van het wereldbeeld dat ons wordt opgedrongen, maar ook de afwijzing daarvan. En als de hel van binnenuit wordt afgewezen,

houdt deze op hel te zijn.” De criticus Arthur Danto merkte dit alles op in een bespreking van het boek van Berger: “..... De charme van Berger’s kunstkritiek ligt precies daar, in zijn kijken naar kunstwerken met een blik om er betekenis in te vinden die ons eigen leven kent.”

In de loop van het verhaal zal ik enkele omstreden ideeën presenteren – mijn zes hierboven opgesomde suggesties, niet om het pittig te maken of om frictie op te roepen, maar eenvoudigweg om te tonen hoe conventionele wijsheden gemakkelijk betwist kunnen worden, en om duidelijk te maken dat ik oorspronkelijke ideeën heb en niet zonder meer de status quo accepteer. Zoals James Boswell opmerkte over de toneelschrijver Oliver Goldsmith: “Toen Goldsmith begon te schrijven, besloot hij uitsluitend nieuws aan het papier toe te vertrouwen; maar achteraf bedacht hij dat wat nieuw was meestal niet deugde, en geleidelijk bekommerde hij zich niet meer zo om nieuwigheid.” Bij het zoeken naar een fris perspectief en naar de interpretatie van het bewijsmateriaal ben ik ‘bekommerd om nieuws’, terwijl ik me bewust ben van Goldsmith’s tegenzin in het zoeken naar nieuwigheden als doel op zichzelf.

Dit boek heeft vier aspecten. Het is geen reis die zich voltrekt langs een rechte lijn. Deze kunstenaars schilderden niet in rechte lijnen, en het religieuze verhaal dat zij in beeld brachten is evenmin rechtlijnig. De thema’s zijn draden in een betoog, gescheiden, overlappend, complementair en conflictueus, ze ondersteunen en bestrijden elkaar, weerspiegelen en hebben de potentie om verwarring te brengen. Samen verhelderen ze elkaar en geven perspectief aan hun tijd.

1. De innerlijke visie van de tijd – een verbeeld paradijs

De kwestie hier is of men aan de relatie kunstenaar-beschouwer het fenomeen kan toeschrijven dat Heisenberg, werkend in de atoomfysica, karakteriseerde als het principe van de onzekerheid: namelijk of door het proces van het waarnemen het de beschouwer is die het resultaat verandert. Het is het vaardigheid van Bosch en Bruegel om persoonlijke ervaringen te incorporeren in hun werk, dat te veranderen en te overstijgen, wat “de wonderlijke balustrade construeert over de afgrond van [hun] verontrusting en angst”. Hun heel verschillende werelden waren boordevol angst. Oude zekerheden vielen weg om vervangen te worden door niets dan vragen. Met de dramatische visuele middelen waarmee zij beiden schilderden, bepaalden ze hun eigen terrein. Ik ben afgereisd om dat terrein te begrijpen, het einde van de Middeleeuwen in de Lage Landen. Hun schilderijen zijn niet allemaal de rechtstreekse vertaling van ervaringen, maar bevatten de dramatische betekenis die schuilt in een vastgelegd moment, een verhaal, een gebeurtenis, een herinnering – ze getuigen nog altijd van de sterke invloed die zij hadden op het innerlijk van hun publiek, de intense meditatieve aspecten van hun werk varieerden van innerlijke visie tot innerlijke strijd.

Proust schreef over “onvrijwillige herinnering”: het idee dat een fractie van ervaring die plotseling bij iemand kan spelen of tevoorschijn kan komen uit de diepte van iemands bewustzijn, de hoedanigheid van het verleden kan oproepen. Jacob Burckhardt schreef dat geschiedenis het verslag is van feiten die de ene periode memorabel vindt van de andere tijd. En Frances Yates schreef er in haar studie *The Art of Memory* (1966) over hoe het uitgewerkte herinneringssysteem van de Grieken, overgenomen en vastgelegd door de Romeinen, over ging in de Europese traditie om in de Renaissance weer tot leven te worden gebracht als onderdeel van het occulte, de relatie verhelderend tussen wetenschappelijke methoden en pogingen om het universum door magie meester te worden.

Hoe dubbelzinnig ook de relatie is tussen herinnering en geschiedenis, de werken van Bosch en Bruegel kunnen beschreven worden als opmerkelijke historische oefeningen in tegengeheugen. Veel van de feiten over het leven van Bosch en Bruegel zijn betwist; echter, hoe de periode van rond 1475 tot 1568 ook wordt bekeken, deze twee schilders karakteriseerden hun tijdvakken visueel zoals weinig andere kunstenaars dat ooit gedaan hebben. Deze benadering kan ter discussie worden gesteld door onder anderen David Hockney, die de interesse van kunsthistorici in iconografie en sociale context eerder afwijst en die ervoor kiest zich te concentreren op hoe kunstenaars hun schilderijen maken in plaats van op wat hen inspireerde.

Daar ben ik het niet mee eens.

In het geval van Bosch en Bruegel, ving hun scherpe blik hun tijd en maakte die memorabel. Dus, om hun schilderijen ten volle te begrijpen, moet men het tijdvak en het oorspronkelijke publiek begrijpen. Wie waren dan deze kunstenaars, wier namen worden gebruikt als epitheton om ofwel een Bruegeliaanse boer

of Boschiaanse duivelskunsten voor de geest te roepen? Wat is het dat het algemene visuele bewustzijn zo in zijn greep heeft gekregen en zoveel indruk heeft gemaakt op onze collectieve verbeelding, dat ‘de foto’s van onze dromen heeft geschilderd’? Wie zijn deze raadselachtige figuren die hun eigen bijvoeglijke namen hebben voortgebracht? Terwijl je alleen maar verwonderd kunt zijn over hoe sterk hun kunst blijft als een of ander spiritueel en artistiek onzekerheidsprincipe van Heisenberg; op het moment dat je hun meest beladen onderwerp probeert te doorgronden, de hulpeloosheid van man en vrouw oog in oog met hun eigen ware karakter, dan verander je de aard van die kunstwerken.

2 Religie – een verloren paradijs

Christendom is een ander land. We moeten ons met dat andere land vertrouwd maken om de betekenis van de schilderijen van Bosch en Bruegel te kunnen begrijpen. Terwijl wij leven in een steeds sterker geseculariseerde en pluralistische maatschappij (Paus Benedictus XVI noemde het ‘agressief seculier’), werkten deze twee kunstenaars in een tijd waarin de Westerse beschaving fundamenteel christelijk was. De Jezus uit de geschiedenis en de Jezus uit het geloof was één en dezelfde. Kijken naar deze schilderijen is het bezoeken van die wereld. En het begrijpen kost enige moeite. Geloof is heden ten dage heel anders omdat de maatschappij anders is. Gezag wordt anders bekeken. Daarom is voor velen het zoeken naar geloof het zoeken naar een gevoel van bewijs. En het kijken naar deze twee kunstenaars is eerder een zoektocht om het voor de hand liggende te verklaren via het verborgene.

Het was geen periode van religieuze tolerantie. In de wereldwijde kunsthandel maakt de Renaissance een soort van renaissance door, een herwaardering die de werkelijkheid van het leven indertijd wegveegt. Maar zoals Robert Hughes het verwoordde: “er is nauwelijks een periode in de geschiedenis te bedenken (behalve die van onszelf) waarin men rondgekeken kan hebben en meer onbeschaafde wreedheden, meer groteske sociale ongelijkheden en een dichter landschap van hysterie gezien kan hebben dan in Noord Europa, met zijn pogroms en godsdienstoorlogen, zijn gillende geselbroeders en ontspoorde profeten die de naderende komst van Armageddon, de eindtijd, aankondigden.” Wij hebben afscheid genomen van de religieuze zekerheden van dat verleden. Nu kunnen commentatoren beweren dat “de valse zekerheden van evangelisch christendom even dor zijn als het scherpe negativisme van de materialistische perspectieven”, terwijl ze Bosch en Bruegel beschouwen als een bezoek aan een andere wereld in een tijd waarin de letterlijke waarheid van elk geschreven woord niet in vraag werd gesteld.

Aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen was schilderen twee keer bidden. Zeker voor Bosch en Bruegel. Door te schilderen werden ze instrumenten van God. Voor Bosch is de christelijke staat die van een vagebond en een bedelaar, de persoon die evenals Job het ‘lijden van de ziel’ meemaakt. Bosch moest schilderen als de heilige van alle buitenstaanders, Bruegel gaf het geloof weer dat “God’s ogen zien wat de onze niet kunnen zien”. Tegenwoordig dagen de schilderijen van Bruegel ons meer uit dan die van zijn voorganger. Zijn opmerkelijke veelzijdigheid suggereert dat zijn werkelijke geloof lag in de kracht van zijn eigen penseel.

De gekruisigde Christus was de kunstmatige brug tussen tijd en eeuwigheid. Een ondubbelzinnige, niet te herhalen gebeurtenis, Hij stierf éénmaal, voor allen - het ultieme offer dat als ritueel elke dag in het openbaar aan het altaar het mythische en het historische met elkaar verbond. De openbaring in Christus van de goedheid van God was een antwoord op het bestaan van het kwade. Zoals Augustinus stelde “God oordeelde het beter om het goede te laten ontspruiten uit het kwade dan het kwade niet te laten bestaan.” De invloed was enorm van deze vijfde-eeuwse Noord-Afrikaanse bisschop als een van de beste gidsen in dit soort zaken. Hij beschouwde kwaad als een verstoring van een goede schepping; het kwade op zich bestaat niet maar is een direct gevolg van het misbruik van de menselijke vrijheid. Augustinus beredeneerde dat kwaad het resultaat was van menselijke wezens die iets trachten te worden wat ze niet zijn, kleine goden met de macht om het leven te geven en te nemen van anderen. Zowel Bosch als Bruegel bonden de strijd aan met kleine goden - het werk van Bosch is een persoonlijke strijd voor het aangezicht van de Heer, Bruegel zoekt betekenis door een theologische en artistieke etiologie te ontwikkelen -, beiden exploreren ze de evangeliën binnen de culturele context van hun tijd, bijbelse exegese zoals die werd beoefend in de premoderne periode.

3 Politiek – een uitgesteld paradijs

De Lage Landen brachten meer geschiedenis voort dan ze kunnen verwerken. Ze brachten wellicht ook meer geschiedenis voort dan wij kunnen verteren. De politiek die hier van belang is aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen en aan de bakermat van de moderne tijd, is religieus. Het was een tijd waarin politiek en religie hopeloos verstrengeld waren, voor beide kunstenaars was godsdienst politiek en politiek godsdienst. De christelijke geschiedenis is bepaald en gefaseerd door een opeenvolging van dramatische conflicten, nachts zoals Mark Wallinger observeerde: "Of we Jezus nu wel of niet als een godheid beschouwen, hij was op zijn minst een politieke leider."

Bosch en Bruegel bevonden zich op de meest gewelddadige van deze grenzen, de een voor altijd terugblikkend als hij vernietiging overdenkt, de ander trachtte tot het uiterste de grens te bereiken maar stopte steeds in de finale poging om deze over te steken. Toch dragen ze beiden het hele christelijke verhaal, de uitdagingen en de vertroosting, wanneer ze aan de slag gaan om de levenspelgrimage en de bestemming van de reis te schilderen; schilderijen over de dood die uitnodigen om te leven, schilderijen die erkennen hoe moeilijk het kan zijn die uitnodiging te aanvaarden; ze dagen de beschouwer, die daarvoor humaan moet zijn, uit hun betekenis te begrijpen.

Beide kunstenaars verkennen ook het karakter en de politiek van macht, waarvoor Bosch bijvoorbeeld de middeleeuwse samenleving arrangeerde als de beulen rond Christus in de *Doornenkroning* in de National Gallery – bestuurders, clerici, kooplieden en boeren. Dan Bruegels boodschap aan bezeten onderdrukkende alleenheersers waar dan ook, hoe nodig het is dat zij ontdekken dat je een idee niet voor eeuwig kunt afschieten, ook al zijn ze niet in staat om zelfbeheersing te tonen in hun brute en overtrokken reacties. Vandaar de razernij die ontstond bij de gedachte aan een nieuw geboren kind dat zich heersersmacht zou toe-eigenen in de *Moord op de Onnozele Kinderen* - Hampton Court - de massamoord die de moord op zoveel mannen en jongens en andere onschuldigen in onze eigen tijd voorafschaduwde. Bruegels schilderijen drongen door in het verleden om schijnwerpers te richten op het heden, het heden van toen en het heden van nu. Bruegel schiep aldus een universeel beeld. Met zijn levensechte inspiratie, inspireert Bruegel anderen.

Een vindingrijk antwoord is een geestelijke oefening, een creatieve poging om te zien en te begrijpen wat de kern van iets is. Zoals Daniël zei over God "Hij onthult diepe en verborgen zaken, en weet wat er in de duisternis schuilt". De kern is waar alle belangrijke gevechten zich afspelen – maar soms vraagt het beeldingskracht om verslag uit te brengen van de frontlinie. Op hun eigen, heel verschillende wijze, zagen deze twee kunstenaars zichzelf op de frontlinie, strijders voor Christus.

4 Landschap – een herwonnen paradijs

Mark Meadow stelde "In de visie van Van Mander, wordt Bruegel de volmaakte brug tussen de twee oevers van de Nederlandse kunst, haar *imitatio* van de natuur en haar *imitatio* van de geest en gevoels van de mens." Als Bruegel inderdaad een verbinding was, dan was dat omdat hij uiteindelijk uit de schaduw van Bosch trad waarin hij zo lang werkte in opdracht van Hieronymus Cock, de ultieme kunstondernemer van zijn tijd die met zijn prentenhandel en uitgeverij, *Aux Quatre Vents*, kunst voor de markt produceerde in de periode dat de burgerij zich bij de culturele elite voegde. Die schaduw had het zwaartekrachtveld van een enorme donkere ster zwevend boven de helft van Bruegels carrière. Zoals Bosch een man was met een zware schaduw, zo was Bruegel lange tijd een schaduw zonder man. Toen hij eenmaal ontsnapt was uit de schaduw van zijn voorganger, werkte Bruegel nog als een bezetene tot het einde van zijn korte leven.

Bruegels toepassing van het landschap is zowel een van zijn grootste vernieuwingen als iets dat een gemakkelijke interpretatie onmogelijk maakt. Los van een iconografische traditie gaf hij ons een eigentijds en herkenbaar beeld van de werkelijke wereld. Mijn visie is dat zijn landschappen gelezen moeten worden om hun epistemologische waarde, wat wil zeggen dat ze de potentie hebben ons meer begrip te bij te brengen van Bruegels tijd.

Bruegels levenspelgrimage was opnieuw een reis naar het onbekende, een reis die uiteraard begint met voorzichtige stappen, die hem zouden vervullen met een mengeling van vrees en verbazing, angstig voor wat fout zou kunnen gaan, begeistert over alles wat ontdekt zou kunnen worden, biddend om de moed deze eerste stappen te zetten, en toch erop vertrouwend dat als hij faalde, God hem zou redden. Bruegel was besluiteloos, zijn stappen waren zeker behoedzaam. Zoals de *Marskramer* van Bosch herinnert hij er ons aan dat Jezus hem had gezegd het rechte pad te nemen, 'niemand

die begint mij te volgen en dan omkijkt, is klaar voor waar heenga.' Sterke taal. Maar in de nieuwe wereld van schijnbaar oneindige keuzes, had Bruegel moed nog nodig om stoere beslissingen te nemen en te weten dat hij levenslang standvastig zou blijven. Het vroege optimisme was niet verminderd, hoe repressief de reactie ook. Desalniettemin komt iedereen in de verleiding over zijn schouder terug te kijken, te denken over wat er geweest zou kunnen zijn, te bidden om moed om voort te gaan naar een onzekere toekomst en om voor de levenslange duur van die reis trouwhartig te zijn.

Sommigen hebben Bruegels geschilderde religieuze taferelen gezien als kleinere gebeurtenissen in de grote machtige natuur. Echter, ze moeten worden gelezen als allegorieën waar landschap en mensheid één zijn, waar de macht van de natuur symbolisch is voor de macht van God. De bekering van een heilige verzwoegen door de bergen, onschuldigen vermoord in een panorama van angst en winterse schoonheid, twee gezichtsloze figuren weg sjokkend in de woestenij met hun pasgeboren zoon in een poging te ontsnappen aan de kindermoord, een zelfmoord genegeerd door twee legers die zijn opgenomen in een berglandschap, de grimmige karakteristieken van het seizoengebonden leven dat overweldigd is door de natuur, een man met een kruis die schijnbaar een bijrol speelt in een reusachtig taferel, een heel oeuvre waar de hoofdrolspelers apart staan, hun handelingen klein zijn gemaakt door hun omgeving: volharding is de enige optie.

Het beste dat we met vijandige natuur kunnen doen is deze accepteren en ondergaan. In Bruegels wereld is overall onverschilligheid, offers lijken betekenisloos, natuur is overweldigend, de mensheid inconsequent, daarom worden we gedwongen onze eigen universele onverschilligheid onder ogen te zien. Zijn alternatief is afsterven op vergetelheid.

De kunst van betekenis

Wat precies de betekenis is van de werken van Bosch en Bruegel is een van de hardnekkigste problemen van de kunstgeschiedenis. De academische competitie om deze twee oeuvres te ontraadselen is nooit verdwenen. Kunstgeschiedenis studeren is enigszins als een film binnenlopen die al begonnen is. Je begint ermee niet te weten wat al gebeurd is en terwijl je probeert je weg te vinden door het donker, is het onvermijdelijk dat je op iemands tenen gaat staan of op zijn minst in iemands blikveld. Sommige mensen schelden naar je, maar in het algemeen volgt een sst sst of zuchten ze luid en verschuiven ze hun benen en jassen om je voorbij te laten gaan. Meestal doen ze alsof je er helemaal niet bent. Een vraag stellen aan de onbekende persoon naast je kan resulteren in van alles, van het complete verhaal en spelersoverzicht tot een volledige afwijzing. Zo gaat het. We kunnen het publiek verstoren.

Kunst heeft publiek nodig om betekenis te krijgen. Betekenis is besloten in de relatie tussen het kunstwerk en de beschouwer. De enige reden dat er een verbinding is tussen de twee, is het culturele begrip dat de beschouwers voor het werk hebben. De betekenis van het werk voor de kunstenaar kan volledig anders zijn, en de betekenis in relatie tot een latere generatie is opnieuw heel anders. De sleutel ligt in het gemeenschappelijke culturele erfgoed dat het oorspronkelijke publiek deelde met de kunstenaar. Wanneer wij zeggen dat we van iets houden maar niet kunnen formuleren wat dat precies behelst, is dat omdat de artistieke uitdrukkingwijze cultureel bepaald, begrepen en ontvangen is zelfs als wij, het publiek, niet volledig begrijpen wat er met ons gebeurt. Het is een emotionele reactie zoals ook kan voorkomen in het theater of in de concerthal. Het gebeurt ons gewoonweg. Een vaag concept, dat ongrijpbaar aanvoelt maar dat in werkelijkheid wel gevat kan worden: dat heet succes.

Het succes van een kunstenaar in het overbrengen van betekenis fluctueert in de loop van de tijd. Het publiek verandert en elk nieuw publiek brengt iets mee naar het kunstwerk dat op verschillende manieren kan resoneren met de beschouwer afhankelijk van de mate waarin deze ervaringen en culturele bagage deelt met de kunstenaar. Het is een transactie tussen de maker en de beschouwer, een aanbod dat wordt aangenomen of afgeslagen. De impulsen die leiden tot ons begrip van de wereld en tot een rijkere waardering die we kunnen hebben voor een kunstwerk, komen van die cultuur, maar omdat geschiedenis voortleeft maar de toekomst al terugblikkend wordt geschreven, kunnen we het resultaat kennen voordat we het begin ervan beschouwen, en kunnen we nooit helemaal opnieuw begrijpen wat het betekende alleen het begin te kennen.

Kunstgeschiedenis is een poging juist dat te doen; degenen die dit toneelspel hebben uitgezet, kenden het einde niet, en ook niemand van ons kent dat al.

Resumen

El arte como historia, la historia como arte.

Jheronimus Bosch y Pieter Bruegel el viejo Emsamblando Conocimientos más que montando puzzles

Tanto El Bosco como Bruegel fueron ensamblando conocimientos más que montando puzzles. Esto es un intento de ver las cosas como ellos las vieron para comprender mejor el porqué pintaron como lo hicieron. Es posible que se considere una aventura especulativa, pero creo que puede mostrarse la motivación social y política que llevó a éstos a producir tales imágenes para identificar y explicar las importantes relaciones que existen entre los hechos.

Ambos artistas reflejaron en sus pinturas resonancias sociales, económicas y políticas que resultan muy familiares, pero que todavía son escasamente entendidas. Hay una motivación social, religiosa y política en su arte, un arte que es descrito frecuentemente en un aislamiento histórico artístico. Rico, inteligente y estrechamente asociado a un ámbito de educada clase media alta, El Bosco fue independiente de patronos. Pudo elegir realizar los encargos que mejor le convenían, o que fueran de su particular interés, o simplemente la gente con la que deseaba trabajar. En la época de Bruegel los tiempos eran más peligrosos, y "el segundo Bosco" hizo del agudo conflicto político y religioso el tema oculto de muchas de sus obras.

Esto no quiere decir que las obras de El Bosco y Bruegel sean como ejercicios miméticos, un registro directo del mundo que les rodeaba, representaciones específicas, sino que trataron de captar algo del poder y la poesía de su tiempo. Ambos manipularon visualmente la riqueza de las asociaciones que establecemos con su época a través de la representación de las fuerzas dirigentes del mundo que les rodeaba.

El marco histórico, esencial para la comprensión de cualquier período de la historia del arte, es también un prerrequisito a la hora de examinar el arte holandés desde 1450 a 1550. El arte cristiano y el resultante uso y abuso de la imaginaria religiosa se había vuelto un problema. El arte cada vez más se convirtió en un comentario visual sobre los tiempos, sobre los cambios políticos, sociales y religiosos, algo fundamental a la hora de formular ideas y asuntos al mismo tiempo que condujo a una transformación de la imaginaria religiosa.

Para El Bosco la imagen era un juego moral sobre la escasez de lo bueno en un mundo lleno de monstruos diabólicos. Para Bruegel era frecuentemente una referencia a acontecimientos políticos.

Lejos de crear pinturas puzzles creo que ellos fueron ensamblando conocimientos como parte de una cultura visual que era capital para la vida de la sociedad. Fue algo más que "un popular mapa de noticias", al que se refiere Svetlana Alpers en relación a un siglo posterior. Se trata del conocimiento del mundo en un determinado momento y de las experiencias que tuvieron dos artistas. Abarca desde la sexualidad y la espiritualidad de El Bosco a una satisfacción secular en Bruegel en una época de agitación social y un punto de cambio en la historia mundial –el comienzo del mundo moderno y el final de la Edad Media.

Me he centrado principalmente en el trasfondo de *El Juicio Final*, *Las Tribulaciones de San Antonio* y *El Jardín de las Delicias* de El Bosco y *La Caída de los Ángeles Rebeldes*, *la Conversión de Saúl*, *el Triunfo de la Muerte*, *la Procesión al Calvario* y *la Matanza de los inocentes* de Bruegel.

Planteo una serie de hipótesis que 1) confío puedan servir para estimular el debate: con toda probabilidad (pese a que generalmente la opinión aceptada es la contraria), El Bosco visitó Italia; 2) que por el contrario, Bruegel, pese a la aparente evidencia, (seguramente) no fue a Italia; 3) que malinterpretaciones de las pinturas de El Bosco han llevado a que el artista sea considerado un pesimista cuando él parece indicar exactamente lo opuesto en su obra; 4) se considera el debate que plantea que El Bosco fue en realidad una figura 5) de conjunto y de que "su" firma estuvo producida por al menos dos manos si no más; de que *El Jardín de las Delicias* ha sido siempre malinterpretado, 6) y que el ciclo de las estaciones de Bruegel puede ser completado en base a obras existentes. Mientras que la última idea es intensamente discutida por algunos, yo llamaría a Albert Einstein en mi defensa: "Si en un primer momento la idea no es absurda, entonces no hay esperanza para ella".

Las vidas de estos dos artistas abarcan un fragmento de tiempo desde la Edad Media hasta el Mundo moderno que ha

sido visto de manera diferente como tiempo que ha pasado. ¿La Edad Media fue el tiempo comprendido entre la primera y segunda llegada de Cristo o un intervalo entre el declive de la Antigüedad y el Renacimiento de la cultura clásica? ¿Fueron Bruegel y sus contemporáneos conscientes de que estaban viviendo en un nuevo orden del mundo donde el atraso medieval era una cosa del pasado, o su mundo les resultaba todavía bárbaro, provinciano e intolerante como ellos pudieron haber visto la época de El Bosco? ¿Cómo impactó el desafío para organizar la Cristiandad, elemento unificador del mundo medieval, sobre la inmovilidad física, social e intelectual de la época? ¿De qué manera se percibieron los cambios en la época, como algo aterrador o emocionante? ¿Se reflejaron algunos de estos cambios en la obra de El Bosco y Bruegel?

¿Representaban sus obras el espíritu de la época o no? Yo siempre he pensado, y sigo creyéndolo, que para comprender lo que El Bosco y Bruegel pintaron es esencial el contexto social, político y religioso. Sin esto, el público estará inmerso en un mar visual sin ninguna ayuda de navegación. Si no tienes conocimiento de la geografía del mapa político y las dinastías que lo controlaron, estarás perdido; si no entiendes que es lo que condujo a Lutero, no apreciarás a Bruegel, si no has leído a Dante o comprendido plenamente la Negra Muerte o la caza de brujas de finales del siglo XV no podrás llegar a El Bosco; si no tienes idea de lo que fue la iglesia medieval, entonces errarás a la hora de comprender a cualquiera de ellos.

Para pintar el Infierno, *Gladius domini super terram*, debes saber que caminas por un delgado borde. Como apuntó Robert Hughes, el lema de Savonarola serviría a El Bosco y Bruegel. Ambos artistas pintaron realmente el mal y la miseria. No debería sorprendernos. Fueron testigos de los horrores de la época, la inhumanidad del hombre hacia el hombre, la persecución, las grotescas desigualdades sociales, las guerras religiosas y los príncipes guerreros, y la llegada inminente de la última batalla entre el bien y el mal, suficiente para colapsar cualquier esperanza en el humanismo y perturbar cualquier orden que un artista tratara de plasmar en una tabla o lienzo. Ellos conectaron el arte con la historia; ellos pintaron lo que estaban viendo.

El libro se divide en nueve capítulos. Dos de ellos se dedican al trasfondo histórico. Hay una serie de comentarios personales entremezclados, a modo de entre actos entre las principales escenas. Se trata de reflexiones sobre los acontecimientos y los artistas en nuestra época en los que repercutieron de alguna manera el Bosco y Bruegel, cuya obra hizo eco con contemporánea resonancia. Ello incluye el haber aplicado una perspectiva de la época presente a la difícil comprensión de lo que estuvo vigente en su época, cómo hacer entender lo que les condujo a ello y ayudar al lector a involucrarse en las obras. Su época puede ser muy diferente a la nuestra, pero escribiendo sobre los acontecimientos y el arte de hoy encuentro los fantasmas del pasado más presentes que nunca.

En *The Shape of the Pocket (La forma de un bolsillo)* de John Berger hay un ensayo "Against the Great Defeat of the World" ("Contra la gran derrota del Mundo") en el que emplea el arte a modo de lente a través de la cual sus pensamientos sobre arte y política son vistos con un determinado enfoque. Comienza con el *Triunfo de la muerte* de Bruegel y, como yo, sin ningún tipo de sorpresa trae a colación los campos de exterminio. (Fui consciente de la solidez de las palabras de Berger cuando estudiaba mi tema, por lo que encontrarás este tipo de comentarios a lo largo de este libro). El mundo en el que nosotros vivimos y actuamos hoy en día puede ser entendido, él propone posteriormente, a través de la representación del Infierno en *El Jardín de las Delicias*, al que él se refiere como "a strange prophecy of the mental climate imposed on the world at the end of our century by globalization and the new economic order" (una extraña profecía del clima mental impuesto en el mundo a finales de nuestro siglo como consecuencia de la globalización y el nuevo orden económico).

Como el Infierno de El Bosco, nuestro mundo es aquel en el que "no hay pausas, ni caminos, ni patrones, ni pasado y tampoco futuro. Existe solo el clamor del disparate, presente fragmentado". Y después señala curiosamente: "El acto de la resistencia significa no sólo el rechazo a aceptar lo absurdo del mundo pintado que se ofrece a nosotros, sino la denuncia de él. Y cuando el infierno es denunciado desde dentro, deja de ser infierno". El crítico, Arthur Danto, apuntó en su reseña del libro de Berger: "... el encanto de la crítica de arte de Berger reside precisamente allí, en su mirada hacia las obras de arte con la intención de encontrar

significados en ellas donde giren nuestras vidas”.

A lo largo del camino presentaré unas cuantas ideas polémicas –mis seis sugerencias listadas arriba, no son simplemente para sazonarlo o causar controversia, sino simplemente para mostrar como la sabiduría convencional puede ser fácilmente cuestionada. Como James Boswell ha apuntado sobre el dramaturgo Oliver Goldsmith: “Cuando Goldsmith empezó a escribir, él decidió plasmar en el papel nada de lo que no fuera nuevo; pero después descubrió que aquello que era nuevo era generalmente falso, y solo ocasionalmente fue solicitado a la novedad”. En la búsqueda de una perspectiva fresca y una interpretación de la evidencia yo estoy “solicitado a la novedad” pese a que todavía reflexiono sobre la reticencia de Goldsmith en la búsqueda de la novedad como un objetivo en sí mismo.

En este libro se tratan cuatro aspectos. No es un viaje que sigue una línea recta. Estos artistas no pintaron en líneas derechas, ni ilustraron historias religiosas. Los temas son hilos en un argumento, separados, superpuestos, complementarios y en conflicto, se apoyan y luchan el uno contra el otro, reflejan y tienen el potencial de confundir. Juntos se iluminan el uno al otro y ofrecen una perspectiva de su época.

1 Período de visión interna – un paraíso imaginado

La cuestión aquí es: ¿se podría atribuir a la relación artista-espectador el fenómeno que Heisenberg, que trabajó sobre física atómica, calificó como principio de incertidumbre: concretamente a través del proceso de observación, el observador altera el resultado? La habilidad de El Bosco y de Bruegel es lo que incorpora experiencia personal a sus obras, hasta llegar a transformarlas y trascenderlas, lo que “construye ese maravilloso parapeto sobre el abismo de su inquietud y aprehensión”. Sus muy diferentes mundos estuvieron colmados de aprehensión. Viejas certidumbres se derrumbaron para dejar paso a nada más que preguntas. En los términos visuales dramáticos en el que ambos pintaron, cartografiaron su propio terreno. Yo me he situado para comprender su territorio al final de la Edad Media en los Países Bajos. Sus pinturas no son del todo directas transcripciones de experiencias sino significados dramáticos que acechan dentro de un único momento en suspensión, una historia, un acontecimiento, un recuerdo – y el impacto que tuvieron en el territorio interno de su público, aspectos contemplativos incontenibles de su obra que van de una visión interna a un conflicto interno.

Proust escribió acerca del “recuerdo involuntario”: la idea de que un fragmento de experiencia podía de repente sobrevenir o ser evocado desde la profundidad de la consciencia, pudiendo expresar la calidad del pasado. Jacob Burckhardt escribió que la historia es el recuerdo de los hechos en los que una época resulta memorable en otra. Y Frances Yates escribió en su estudio sobre el arte de la memoria sobre como los elaborados sistemas de memoria griegos, heredados y registrados por los romanos, pasaron a la tradición europea para revivir durante el Renacimiento como parte de lo oculto, iluminando la relación entre el método científico y los intentos de dominar el universo mediante interpretaciones mágicas.

Aunque ambigua la relación entre la memoria y la historia, la obra de El Bosco y Bruegel puede ser descrita como ejercicios históricos excéntricos en los límites de la memoria. Muchos de los hechos de las vidas de El Bosco y Bruegel son cuestionados, sin embargo, si uno mira el período comprendido entre 1475 y 1568, estos dos artistas visualmente definieron sus épocas como muy pocos otros artistas lo hicieron. Este acercamiento ha sido cuestionado, entre otros, por David Hockney, que desdeña el interés de los historiadores del arte en la iconografía y el contexto social, para optar por centrarse en como los artistas eligieron hacer imágenes más que lo que les inspiraron éstas.

Yo no estoy de acuerdo.

En el caso de El Bosco y Bruegel, sus ojos incisivos capturaron e hicieron su época memorable. De este modo para entender verdaderamente sus pinturas, uno tiene que comprender la época y a su público. ¿Quiénes fueron entonces estos artistas, sus nombres utilizados como epítetos que evocan a un Bruegel campesino y a un diabólico bosquiano? ¿Qué es eso que ha capturado tanto la consciencia visual universal que ha dejado una huella en nuestra imaginación colectiva, “las fotografías pintadas de nuestros sueños”? ¿Quiénes son esas misteriosas figuras que han generado sus propios adjetivos? Como uno no puede sino maravillarse de la fuerza con que su arte permanece, como un espiritual y artístico principio de incertidumbre de Heisenberg, el

momento en el que se trata de considerar su tema más profundo, la impotencia de hombres y mujeres frente a su verdadero carácter, se cambia su propia naturaleza.

2 Religión –un paraíso perdido

La Cristiandad es otro mundo. Tenemos que familiarizarnos nosotros mismos con ella para entender el significado de estas pinturas. Por mucho que podamos estar viviendo en una progresiva sociedad secular y pluralista (lo que el Papa Benedicto XVI llamó “agresivamente secular”), estos artistas trabajaron en una época en que la civilización occidental era fundamentalmente cristiana. El Jesús de la historia y el Cristo de la fe eran uno y el mismo para ellos. Para mirar estas pinturas es preciso adentrarse en ese mundo. Y así podremos llegar a comprenderlo. La creencia se concibe de manera diferente hoy en día, porque la sociedad es también diferente. La autoridad es vista de manera diferente. Por tanto, para muchos buscar creencias es la búsqueda de un sentimiento de evidencia. Y mirar a estos artistas es algo más que un concurso para explicar lo obvio a través de lo oscuro.

Ésta no fue una época de tolerancia religiosa. En las galerías de arte alrededor del mundo el Renacimiento está renaciendo, una renovación que evita la realidad de la vida de su tiempo. Pero como ha señalado Robert Hughes: “it is hard to think of any period in history (except our own) in which one could have looked about and seen more savage cruelties, more grotesque social inequities and a denser landscape of hysteria than in northern Europe, its pogroms and religious wars, its screeching flagellants and deranged messiahs proclaiming the imminent arrival of Armageddon.” (es difícil pensar en un período de la historia (excepto el nuestro) en el que uno pueda haber visto más crueldades salvajes, más grotescas desigualdades sociales y un mayor panorama de histeria que en el Norte de Europa, sus matanzas y guerras religiosas, sus chillidos flagelantes y enloquecidos mesías proclamando la inminente llegada del fin del mundo”). Hemos dicho adiós a las certidumbres religiosas del pasado. Ahora, los comentaristas pueden alegar que “las falsas certidumbres de la Cristiandad evangélica son tan áridas como el negativismo agudo de la perspectiva materialista” considerando al Bosco y Bruegel como una visita a otro mundo en un tiempo en el que la verdad literal de cualquier palabra de Escritura no se cuestionaba.

Al final de la Edad Media, pintar era como rezar dos veces. El Bosco y Bruegel realmente lo hicieron. Pintando, ellos se convirtieron en instrumentos de Dios. Para el Bosco, la condición cristiana es la de un vagabundo y un mendigo, aquél que está con Job en “la angustia del alma”. El Bosco tuvo que pintar como el santo de todos los extranjeros, Bruegel reflexionó sobre la creencia de que “los ojos de Dios veían lo que los nuestros no podían”. Hoy en día, las pinturas de Bruegel nos suponen un desafío mayor que aquéllas de su predecesor. Su destacada versatilidad sugiere que su verdadera fe residía en el poder de su propio pincel.

Cristo en la Cruz era el puente expiatorio entre el tiempo y la eternidad. Un acontecimiento inequívoco, irrepetible. Él murió una vez, por todos, el sacrificio definitivo, como un ritual que mezcla tiempo mitológico e histórico cada día, en público, en el altar. La revelación de la divinidad de Dios en Cristo fue una respuesta a la existencia del diablo. Como Agustín señaló “Dios juzgó mejor sacar lo bueno de lo malo que sufrir para que no existiera maldad”. Uno de los mejores guías en estas materias, el impacto de este obispo del siglo quinto del norte de África fue inmenso. Él vio lo demoníaco como un desorden en la creación divina; no existía por su propio derecho, sino como una directa consecuencia de nuestro mal uso de la libertad humana. Agustín argumentaba que la maldad era el resultado de que los seres humanos trataran de convertirse en algo que no eran, pequeños dioses con el poder de dar y quitar las vidas de los demás. Ambos El Bosco y Bruegel batallaron con dioses pequeños, pero mientras que la obra de El Bosco es una búsqueda personal del rostro del Señor, y Bruegel busca el significado mediante el desarrollo de una etiología artística teológica, ambos utilizan los Evangelios en el contexto cultural de su época, exégesis bíblica como era practicada en la era pre-moderna.

3 Política – un paraíso pospuesto

Los Países Bajos producen más historia de la que pueden consumir. Pueden también haber producido más historia de la que podemos digerir. La política que me concierne aquí al final de la Edad Media y el nacimiento de la era moderna, es religiosa. Era un tiempo en que la política y la religión se confundían totalmente pero, para ambos

artistas la religión era política y la política era religión. La historia cristiana ha estado interrumpida por una sucesión de discusiones drásticas, sin embargo, como ha observado Max Wallinger: “Whether or not we regard Jesus as a deity, he was at the very least a political leader.” (“Consideremos o no a Jesús como una deidad, él era como poco un líder político”).

El Bosco y Bruegel se colocaron a ambos lados de lo más violento de estas líneas, uno para siempre mirando hacia atrás contemplando la aniquilación, el otro empujando fuerte hacia la línea pero siempre manteniéndose detrás en su intento final de cruzarla. Ambos expresaron toda la historia cristiana, sus retos y sus consuelos, cuando representaron el peregrinaje de la vida y el destino del viaje; pinturas de la muerte que son una invitación a la vida, pinturas que valoran como de difícil puede ser aceptar esta invitación, y que reconocen cuánto desafío requiere el espectador para comprender su significado emprendiendo la tarea del ser humano.

Ambos artistas exploraron asimismo la naturaleza del poder. El Bosco, por ejemplo, caracterizó la sociedad medieval como los tormentos de Cristo en *La Coronación de las espinas* en la National Gallery –gobernantes, hombres de iglesia, comerciantes y campesinos. Luego vino el mensaje de Bruegel para crédulos autócratas represivos por todas partes, con su necesidad de descubrir que no se puede sofocar una idea para siempre, por incapaces que ellos puedan ser de mostrar moderación cuando tienen la posibilidad de reaccionar de una forma excesivamente brutal. Por consiguiente, la rabia generada por la idea de que un recién nacido pudiera usurpar el poder de un gobernante en la *Matanza de los Inocentes* en Hampton Court refleja la masacre de tantos hombres y niños y otros inocentes durante la guerra balcánica. Sus pinturas penetraron el pasado para centrar la atención en el presente, y de este modo crearon una imagen universal. Una vida inspirada, Brueghel inspira a otros.

Una respuesta imaginativa es un ejercicio espiritual, un esfuerzo creativo para ver y entender lo que está en el corazón de algo. Como Daniel dijo de Dios, “Él revela cosas profundas y ocultas, y sabe que es lo que permanece en la oscuridad”. El corazón es donde todas las importantes batallas ocurren – pero a veces se requiere imaginación para informar desde la frontera. De muy diferentes maneras, estos dos artistas se vieron a sí mismos en la frontera, como guerreros de Cristo.

4 Paisaje – un paraíso recuperado

Según Mark Meadow: “Van Mander consideraba que Bruegel llegó a ser un perfecto puente entre las dos facetas del arte flamenco: su *imitatio* de la naturaleza y su *imitatio* de la mente y las emociones del hombre”. Si fue un punto de unión, lo fue porque siguió la sombra de El Bosco trabajando largo tiempo bajo la orden de Hieronymus Cock, máximo empresario de arte de su tiempo con su negocio de imprenta y editorial, *Aux Quatre Vents*, que producía arte para un mercado en un momento en que la burguesía se incorporaba a la elite cultural. Esta sombra tuvo el campo gravitatorio de una enorme estrella oscura cerniéndose sobre la mitad de la carrera de Bruegel. Si el Bosco fue un hombre con una sombra, durante el mismo tiempo Bruegel fue la sombra sin el hombre. Una vez que logró escapar de la sombra de su predecesor trabajó frenéticamente hasta el final de su corta vida.

El uso que Bruegel hizo del paisaje es a la vez una de sus mayores innovaciones y algo que desafía una fácil interpretación. Apartado de la tradición iconográfica, nos dio una visión contemporánea y palpable del mundo natural. Mi punto de vista es que sus paisajes tienen que ser leídos por su valor epistemológico, ya que tienen el potencial para facilitarnos el conocimiento sobre su época.

El peregrinaje de la vida fue una vez más un viaje a lo desconocido, un viaje que empieza naturalmente con pasos inciertos, que conducen con una mezcla de miedo y maravilla, aterrorizado por lo que pudiera ir mal, intrigado por todo aquello que pueda ser descubierto, rogando por el coraje para dar esos primeros pasos, confiando aún que si él flaqueara, Dios le rescataría. Bruegel era un indeciso, sus pasos fueron ciertamente cautelosos. Como *El caminante* de El Bosco, nos recuerda que Jesús les había dicho directamente, “nadie que empieza siguiéndome y luego mira hacia atrás está listo para donde voy a ir”. Duras palabras. Pero en el nuevo mundo de las infinitas elecciones aparentes, Bruegel necesitaba aún el coraje para tomar duras decisiones y saber que él permanecería firme durante su vida. El temprano optimismo no se había acabado de abatir, pese a la respuesta represora. Sin embargo, todo el mundo estaba tentado a mirar hacia atrás sobre sus hombros, para pensar sobre lo que podrían

haber sido, pedir coraje para caminar hacia adelante hacia un futuro incierto, y tener fe durante el transcurso de sus vidas de este viaje.

Algunos han visto los episodios religiosos pintados de Bruegel como ocurrencias menores en la gran superficie de la naturaleza. Sin embargo, éstos pueden ser interpretados como alegorías donde el paisaje y la humanidad son uno solo, el poder de la naturaleza simbólica del poder de Dios. Una conversión del santo empujando por las montañas, inocentes asesinados en un panorama de horror y belleza invernal, dos figuras sin rostro caminando fatigosamente en el páramo con su niño en un intento de escapar del infanticidio, un suicidio ignorado por dos ejércitos abrumados por los paisajes montañosos, las tristes características de la vida estacional dominadas por la naturaleza, un hombre con su Cruz que parece ser un acontecimiento al margen, un cuerpo entero de trabajo donde las características principales están aisladas, sus acciones empujadas por sus entornos, la perseverancia es la única opción.

Lo mejor que podemos hacer con una naturaleza hostil es hacerle frente. En el mundo de Bruegel, la apatía es endémica, el sacrificio puede estar carente de significado, la naturaleza es dominante, la humanidad es intrascendente, por lo tanto estamos forzados a enfrentar la indiferencia de nuestro propio universo. Su alternativa es dirigirnos al olvido.

El Arte del significado

El averiguar cuál es exactamente el significado de la obra de El Bosco y Bruegel es uno de los deportes sangrientos de la historia del arte. La competición académica para resolver esto no ha disminuido nunca. Estudiar la historia del arte es algo como caminar en una película que ya ha empezado. Empiezas sin saber lo que ya ha pasado, intentas encontrar tu camino en la oscuridad, por lo que es inevitable que dependas de los pasos de alguien, o al menos sigas su camino. A veces la gente te increpa, pero generalmente solo muestran señal de desaprobación, suspiran hondamente y mueven sus piernas y abrigos para dejarte pasar. La mayor parte de las veces, intentan hacer ver que no estás allí del todo. Hacer una pregunta sobre la persona que está al lado tuyo puede resultar cualquier cosa, desde un argumento completo con lista del elenco a un completo desaire. Así funciona. Podemos molestar al público.

Para que el arte tenga un significado se necesita un público. El significado reside en la relación entre la obra de arte y el espectador. La única razón que hay para una conexión entre los dos es la comprensión cultural que el espectador aporta a la obra. El significado de la obra para el artista puede ser completamente diferente, y el significado en una conexión con una generación posterior algo diferente de nuevo. Es el patrimonio cultural compartido lo que el público original tiene con el artista, donde reside la clave. Cuando decimos que nos gusta algo, pero no podemos expresar el qué, es porque la expresión artística es recibida, entendida y apreciada culturalmente, incluso cuando nosotros, el público, no comprende del todo lo que pasa. Es una respuesta emocional que puede equipararse a lo que ocurre en el hall de un teatro o concierto. Sólo lo hacemos. Un concepto nebuloso, algo que se siente intangible, pero que puede ser capturado: es lo que se llama el éxito.

El éxito del artista a la hora de transmitir el significado crece y decrece a lo largo del tiempo, el público cambia, cada uno trae algo a la obra que puede resonar en el espectador de manera diferente dependiendo del grado en que comparta las experiencias y el patrimonio cultural del artista. Es una transacción entre el creador y el espectador, una oferta aceptada o rechazada. Los imperativos que conducen nuestra comprensión del mundo, y la apreciación más rica que podemos tener de una obra de arte vienen de esa cultura, pero como la historia se vive hacia atrás se escribe en retrospectiva de manera que podemos conocer el resultado antes de saber el principio y nunca podemos completamente capturar de nuevo lo que fue sabido únicamente al comienzo.

La historia del arte es un intento para hacer sólo lo que aquéllos que actúan en este drama no sabían ni nosotros tampoco sabemos todavía, el final.

Traducido del inglés por Elena Vázquez Dueñas

Résumé

L'art en tant qu'histoire, l'histoire en tant qu'art*Jérôme Bosch et Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien**– assembleurs de connaissances plutôt que de rébus*

Bosch comme Bruegel composaient des assemblages de connaissances plutôt que de mystérieux rébus. Mieux comprendre pourquoi ils ont peint ce qu'ils ont peint, c'est s'efforcer de voir leurs œuvres comme les voyait leur public. Certains estimeront qu'il s'agit de spéculations aventureuses ; j'ai pour ma part la conviction qu'il est possible de mettre à jour les motivations sociales et politiques des images qu'ils ont produites et qu'elles peuvent servir de clé pour identifier et expliquer des relations pertinentes entre les faits tels qu'on les observe.

Chez ces deux artistes, les résonances sociales, économiques et politiques sont familières, d'une trop grande évidence sans doute, tout en restant peu comprises. Leurs œuvres procèdent de motivations sociales, religieuses et politiques ; or, elles ont été fréquemment décrites dans le domaine isolé d'une discipline, celle de l'histoire de l'art. Fortuné, intelligent, étroitement lié à un milieu aisé et cultivé, Bosch ne dépendait pas de ses commanditaires. Il pouvait accepter les commandes qui lui convenaient ou qui l'intéressaient plus particulièrement, ou simplement accéder aux demandes des gens pour qui il souhaitait travailler. L'époque de Bruegel était plus troublée ; c'est sans doute pourquoi le « deuxième Bosch » a fait des âpres conflits politiques et religieux de son temps le sujet enfoncé au creux d'une bonne partie de son œuvre.

Pour autant, les œuvres de Bosch et de Bruegel ne constituent pas des exercices de mimétisme, un miroir fidèle du monde qui les entourait, où se refléchiraient des représentations exactes et précises ; toutes deux, cependant, saisissent quelque chose de la puissance et de la poésie de leur temps. Chacun, Bosch et Bruegel, brassent sur le plan visuel le trésor d'associations qui nous relie à leur temps par la mémoire des forces agissant dans le monde autour d'eux.

Le cadre historique est un prérequis pour la compréhension de toute période envisagée selon la perspective de l'histoire de l'art. Il est tout aussi essentiel pour l'étude de l'art des Pays-Bas de 1450 à 1550. L'art chrétien, et l'usage ou l'abus d'une imagerie religieuse, était devenu problématique. L'art s'était peu à peu et de plus en plus mué en un commentaire visuel des temps présents et des changements politiques, sociaux et religieux, un instrument au service de l'exposition d'idées et de thèses, tout en menant à une transformation de l'imagerie religieuse elle-même.

Pour Bosch, l'image était une moralité mettant en scène l'absence ou la rareté du bien dans un monde en proie aux monstres. Bruegel s'en est souvent servi pour faire référence à des événements politiques.

Plutôt que d'y voir des peintures-rébus, j'ai la conviction que les tableaux de ces artistes formaient des assemblages de connaissances dans le cadre d'une culture visuelle qui occupait une position centrale dans la vie de la société d'alors. Leur œuvre est autre chose et plus que ce « dossier de presse pour le peuple » dont parle Svetlana Alpers à propos d'un siècle ultérieur. Elle se rapporte à la connaissance du monde à une époque particulière, et à la manière dont deux artistes l'ont vécu. Elle va de la sexualité et de la spiritualité de Bosch aux « satisfactions mondaines » de Bruegel, en un temps de bouleversements sociaux à un moment charnière de l'histoire mondiale – les commencements du monde moderne, la fin du Moyen Âge.

Je me suis principalement attaché au contexte des œuvres suivantes : *Le Jugement dernier*, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* et *Le Jardin des délices* pour Bosch ; *La Chute des anges rebelles*, *La Conversion de Saint Paul*, *Le triomphe de la mort*, *Le Portement de Croix* et *Le Massacre des innocents* pour Bruegel. Je propose une série d'hypothèses de travail dont je ne doute pas qu'elles feront débat. Ces hypothèses, les voici : 1) il est très probable que Bosch se soit rendu en Italie (contrairement à ce que l'on accepte habituellement) ; 2) malgré d'apparentes preuves du contraire, Bruegel pourrait tout aussi bien ne pas avoir fait le voyage d'Italie ; 3) des interprétations erronées des tableaux de Bosch ont conduit à y lire une vision pessimiste, alors que son œuvre recèle sans doute des indications qui vont exactement en sens contraire ; 4) il faut prendre en considération les discussions sur le fait de savoir si Bosch était une seule personne ou si les œuvres portant « sa » signature n'ont pas été produites par au moins deux artistes, voire davantage ; 5) *le Jardin des délices* a constamment été mal interprété ; 6) le cycle des *Saisons* de Bruegel peut être complété en prenant en considération les œuvres conservées. Cette dernière idée est violemment combattue par certains, mais je citerai pour ma défense cette phrase d'Albert Einstein : « Si de prime abord une idée

ne semble pas absurde, il ne faut pas en espérer beaucoup ».

Les vies des deux artistes que j'étudie enjambent le passage du temps du Moyen Âge aux temps modernes, un passage qui a été interprété différemment au fil du temps. Le Moyen Âge a-t-il été le temps qui sépare la Première de la Deuxième Venue du Christ, ou un intervalle entre le déclin de l'Antiquité et le renouveau de la culture classique ? Bruegel et ses contemporains réalisaient-ils qu'ils vivaient dans un nouveau monde, où l'arriération médiévale appartenait au passé, ou bien leur monde leur apparaissait-il aussi barbare, étroitement provincial et fanatique qu'ils pouvaient penser que l'avait été celui de Bosch ? Quel a été l'impact de la remise en question d'une chrétienté organisée, élément unificateur du monde médiéval, sur l'immobilisme physique, social et intellectuel de leur temps ? Comment considéreraient-ils le changement ? L'a-t-on remarqué, inspirait-il l'enthousiasme ou plutôt l'effroi ? Et ces changements, trouvent-ils un écho dans l'œuvre de Bosch et de Bruegel ?

Leur œuvre représente-t-elle l'esprit de leur époque ou non ? J'ai toujours cru, comme je le crois encore, que la compréhension de ce que Bosch et Bruegel ont peint passe par une compréhension de leur contexte social, politique, religieux. Sans cela, le spectateur se débat dans un océan visuel sans instruments de navigation. À défaut de connaître la carte politique de l'époque et les dynasties qui la commandaient, il est perdu ; s'il ignore les motivations de Luther, il n'appréciera pas Bruegel à sa juste mesure ; s'il n'a pas lu Dante, saisi l'étendue de la Peste Noire ou de la chasse aux sorcières engagée à la fin du 15^{ème} siècle, il ne verra pas Bosch ; et s'il ne sait ce qu'était l'Église au Moyen Âge, il ne comprendra ni l'un ni l'autre.

Peindre l'Enfer, *gladius domini super terram*, il faut savoir que c'était s'avancer en terrain miné. Comme l'a observé Robert Hughes, la devise de Savonarole aurait pu être celle de Bosch et de Bruegel. Si les deux artistes ont à coup sûr peint le mal et la misère, cela ne doit pas nous étonner. Ils ont été les témoins des horreurs de leur temps, de l'inhumanité de l'homme pour l'homme, de persécutions, d'inégalités sociales qui dépassent l'entendement, de guerres de religions et de princes guerriers, ainsi que de l'arrivée imminente de la bataille finale entre le bien et le mal : de quoi détruire toute foi en l'humanisme et tout ordre qu'un artiste puisse, en peignant, tenter de créer sur la toile ou le panneau. Ils ont mis en lien l'art et l'histoire ; ils ont peint ce qu'ils ont vu.

Mon ouvrage est divisé en neuf chapitres, dont deux sont consacrés au contexte historique. Ils sont entrecoupés d'une série d'intermèdes personnels, d'entractes placés entre les scènes principales. Ce sont autant de réflexions sur des événements ou artistes de notre époque qui font écho à certains éléments de l'œuvre de Bosch et de Bruegel, œuvre qui à son tour renvoie un écho éminemment contemporain. S'ils sont inclus dans ce livre, c'est qu'ils peuvent donner une certaine perspective actuelle à la difficulté de comprendre ce qu'être vivant signifiait à l'époque de Bosch et de Bruegel, de façon à mieux comprendre ce qui les animait et à aider le lecteur à s'approprier leur œuvre. Leur époque était certes très différente de la nôtre ; toutefois, la chronique des événements et de l'art de notre temps m'a permis de retrouver, plus présents que jamais, les fantômes du passé.

Dans *La forme d'une poche*, l'écrivain et critique John Berger a inclus l'essai « Contre la grande défaite du monde », où l'art est utilisé comme une lentille qui permet à l'auteur de faire en quelque sorte la mise au point de ses pensées sur l'art et la politique. Au départ du *Triomphe de la mort* de Bruegel, sa réflexion l'amène, tout comme moi et sans que cela doive étonner, aux camps d'extermination. (En explorant mon sujet, je me suis rendu compte de la force des mots de Berger, et je ne manque pas de me référer à eux.) Berger suggère plus loin que le monde dans lequel nous vivons et agissons aujourd'hui, nous pouvons le comprendre au travers de la peinture de l'Enfer dans *Le Jardin des délices*, dans laquelle il voit « une étrange prophétie, préfigurant le climat mental qu'imposent au monde, à la fin de notre siècle, la mondialisation et le nouvel ordre économique ».

Comme l'enfer de Bosch, notre monde est un monde « sans relâche, sans route tracée, sans motif, sans passé, sans futur. Il n'y a que les cris d'un présent disparate et fragmenté ». Ailleurs, de façon interpellante, il écrit : « L'acte de résistance ne signifie pas seulement refuser d'accepter l'absurdité de l'image du monde qui nous est présentée, mais la dénoncer. Or, lorsqu'on dénonce l'enfer de l'intérieur, il cesse d'être un enfer. » Le critique Arthur Danto a déjà observé tout cela dans un compte rendu de l'ouvrage de Berger : « ... l'attrait de la critique artistique de Berger réside précisément en cela, sa façon de considérer les œuvres d'art dans l'intention d'y trouver des significations qui importent pour notre vie. »

Tout au long de mon livre, je présente une série d'idées qui prêteront sans doute à débat – ce sont les six suggestions que j'ai exposées plus haut. Je ne le fais pas par esprit de provocation ou pour créer la controverse, mais pour montrer que l'opinion commune peut être mise en défaut. Comme l'indiquait James Boswell à propos du dramaturge Oliver Goldsmith : « Lorsque Goldsmith a commencé à écrire, il avait décidé de ne mettre sur papier que des choses nouvelles ; plus tard, il a estimé que ce qui est nouveau est généralement faux, et s'est parfois montré moins friand de nouveauté. » Dans ma recherche d'une nouvelle perspective et d'une nouvelle interprétation des faits, je suis au contraire « friand de nouveauté », tout en partageant la réticence de Goldsmith devant la poursuite de la nouveauté pour elle-même.

Ce livre comporte quatre facettes, sans tracer un cheminement sur une droite route. Le pinceau des artistes étudiés ici empruntait des chemins multiples et détournés, de même que les épisodes religieux qu'ils ont illustrés. Leurs thématiques constituent la trame complexe d'un argument, elles divergent, se superposent, se complètent et s'opposent, se confirment ou entrent en conflit, se reflètent, peuvent semer la confusion chez le spectateur. Néanmoins, elles s'éclairent l'une l'autre et mettent en perspective le temps qui les a vues naître.

1 La vision intérieure – un paradis imaginaire

Se pose ici la question de savoir si l'on peut attribuer à la relation entre l'artiste et le spectateur le phénomène qu'Heisenberg, dans le domaine de la physique nucléaire, a appelé le principe d'incertitude : à savoir que par son observation même, l'observateur modifie ce qu'il observe. Il appartient à la capacité qu'ont Bosch et Bruegel d'intégrer leurs expériences personnelles dans leur œuvre, de les transformer et de les transcender, de façon à « construire un étonnant garde-fou par-dessus le gouffre de [leur] malaise et de [leurs] craintes ». Leurs mondes à tous deux, malgré leur différence, étaient un monde où régnait l'angoisse. Les anciennes certitudes avaient disparu ou étaient en train de l'être, ne laissant que des questions. Tous deux, dans le plus prégnant des langages visuels, ont dressé la carte de ces questions. J'ai entrepris d'arpenter ce territoire, celui de la fin du Moyen Âge aux Pays-Bas. Il ne faut pas voir leurs tableaux comme des transcriptions immédiates d'expériences tangibles, mais y retenir la portée que recèle tel moment arrêté, tel récit, tel événement, tel souvenir – et le retentissement qu'ils pouvaient avoir sur le territoire intérieur de leur public, les brûlants aspects méditatifs de ces œuvres, qui vont de la vision intérieure au conflit intérieur.

Proust a écrit sur la « mémoire involontaire » en avançant l'idée qu'un fragment d'expérience puisse soudainement s'imposer à une personne ou, évoqué depuis les profondeurs de la conscience, puisse ramener la *qualité* du passé. Jacob Burckhardt a affirmé que l'histoire est l'enregistrement de faits qu'une époque repère comme mémorables dans une autre. Quant à Frances Yates, dans son étude sur l'art de la mémoire, elle retrace la manière dont les systèmes mnémotechniques élaborés mis au point par les Grecs, recueillis et repris par les Romains, ont perduré dans la tradition européenne et ont été revivifiés à la Renaissance dans le cadre de l'occultisme, éclairant ainsi la relation entre méthode scientifique et tentatives de maîtriser l'univers par des moyens magiques.

Quoi qu'il en soit de la relation ambiguë entre mémoire et histoire, l'œuvre de Bosch et de Bruegel peut être décrite en termes d'inédits exercices historiques de contre-mémoire. S'il est vrai qu'un grand nombre de faits quant à la vie de Bosch et de Bruegel sont sujets à caution et critiques, il reste que, quelle que soit la façon dont on envisage la période allant d'environ 1475 à 1568, ces deux artistes ont donné de leur époque une empreinte visuelle comme peu l'ont jamais fait. Certains contesteront cette approche, comme David Hockney, qui montre un certain dédain pour l'intérêt qu'un historien de l'art peut porter à l'iconographie et au contexte social et préfère s'attacher au mode de production des images créées par les artistes plutôt qu'à leurs sources d'inspiration. Je m'inscris en faux contre cette position.

Dans le cas de Bosch et de Bruegel, leur regard aigu a saisi leur époque et l'a rendue mémorable. De ce fait, pour comprendre pleinement leurs peintures, nous devons comprendre cette époque ainsi que leur public. Qui, dans ces conditions, étaient ces artistes, dont les noms éponymes nous servent à évoquer le paysan bruegelien ou quelque diablerie boschienne ? Quoi, chez eux, a pu figurer autant une conscience visuelle universelle, marquer aussi profondément l'imaginaire collectif, « peindre les photographies de nos rêves » ? Qui sont ces mystérieux personnages qui se sont fait adjectifs dans notre façon de parler ? On ne peut que s'émerveiller devant la puissance que leur art conserve encore et toujours,

comme une sorte de principe spirituel et artistique d'incertitude heisenbergienne ; mais cet art change de nature dès que l'on tente d'en appréhender le sujet le plus profond, qui est la faiblesse de l'homme et de la femme devant leur être véritable.

2 La religion – un paradis perdu

La chrétienté constitue un autre continent que nous devons explorer pour comprendre la signification de leurs peintures. Alors que nous vivons dans une société pluraliste et de plus en plus sécularisée (le Pape Benoît XVI l'appelait « agressivement séculière »), ces artistes travaillaient à une époque où la civilisation occidentale était de part en part chrétienne. Pour eux, le personnage historique de Jésus et le Christ de la foi sont une seule et même chose. Regarder leurs tableaux, c'est entrer dans ce monde. Mais il y faut un effort de compréhension. La foi d'aujourd'hui est très différente de ce qu'elle était alors, parce que notre société est très différente. L'attitude devant l'autorité est différente. Pour beaucoup, la recherche de la foi se ramène à une recherche de la preuve, de l'évidence. Or, en observant l'œuvre de ces artistes, on voit plutôt une quête de ce qui est évident par le biais de ce qui est obscur.

L'époque n'était pas à la tolérance en matière religieuse.

Dans les galeries d'art du monde entier, la Renaissance connaît un retour, un *remake* qui oblitère sous ses surpeints la réalité de la vie de l'époque. Cependant, comme l'indique Robert Hughes : « il est difficile d'imaginer – à l'exception de la nôtre – une période de l'histoire où l'on trouverait plus de sauvagerie et de cruauté, des inégalités sociales plus monstrueuses et une hystérie plus répandue et plus tonitruante que l'Europe du Nord, avec ses pogroms et ses guerres de religion, les hurlements de ses flagellants et ses prophètes illuminés annonçant la venue imminente de la fin des temps ». Nous avons abandonné les certitudes religieuses de ce temps passé. Aujourd'hui, les commentateurs peuvent dire que « les fausses certitudes des chrétiens évangélistes sont tout aussi stériles que le négativisme militant de la vision matérialiste ». Dans ce contexte, regarder Bosch et Bruegel, c'est visiter un autre monde, celui d'une époque qui ne mettait en doute la vérité littérale d'aucun mot des Écritures.

À la fin du Moyen Âge, peindre était prier deux fois, et c'est à coup sûr ce que Bosch et Bruegel ont fait. En peignant, ils se faisaient instruments de Dieu. Pour Bosch, la condition chrétienne est celle d'un vagabond et d'un mendiant, de celui qui, avec Job, vit « la détresse de son âme ». Bosch allait être le peintre des réprouvés. Bruegel, en revanche, allait figurer la croyance que « les yeux de Dieu voient ce que nous ne pouvons voir ». Aujourd'hui, les tableaux de Bruegel nous interpellent et nous questionnent davantage que ceux de son prédécesseur, au point que sa remarquable souplesse et son abondance de traitements peuvent faire penser que ce en quoi il croyait véritablement était avant tout la puissance de son pinceau.

Le Christ en Croix était le pont sacrificiel entre le temps et l'éternité, un événement clair et évident, unique, sans répétition possible. Le Christ est mort une seule fois et pour nous tous, accomplissant le sacrifice ultime qui, dans le rituel, sur l'autel, se présente sous la forme d'un composé de temps mythique et historique, aux yeux de tous, jour après jour. La révélation de la bonté de Dieu dans le Christ était une réponse à l'existence du mal. Comme l'avait dit Saint Augustin : « Dieu a préféré que le bien puisse sortir du mal que de souffrir qu'il n'y ait pas de mal ». Les paroles de cet évêque nord-africain du cinquième siècle, l'un des meilleurs guides en la matière, ont eu une influence immense. Il considérait le mal comme un désordre dans une création bonne ; le mal n'avait pas d'existence en soi, mais était une conséquence directe d'un mauvais usage de la liberté humaine. Saint Augustin affirmait que le mal était le résultat de la tentative des hommes de devenir ce qu'ils ne sont pas, de petits dieux ayant le pouvoir de donner et de prendre la vie d'autrui. Bosch comme Bruegel ont été aux prises avec ces petits dieux. Alors que l'œuvre de Bosch constitue une recherche personnelle de la Face du Seigneur et que Bruegel est en quête de sens par le déploiement d'une étioologie théologique et artistique, tous deux puisent aux ressources des évangiles dans le contexte culturel de leur temps, l'exégèse biblique telle qu'elle était pratiquée à l'époque prémoderne.

3 La politique – un paradis différé

Les Pays-Bas produisent plus d'histoire qu'ils ne peuvent en consommer. Il se peut bien aussi qu'ils aient produit plus d'histoire que nous ne pouvons en absorber. La politique à laquelle je m'intéresse ici, celle de la fin du Moyen Âge et des temps modernes naissants, est religion tout autant que politique. C'était un temps où politique et religion étaient toutes deux dans une grande confusion ; toutefois, pour les deux artistes considérés ici, la religion relevait du politique et

la politique relevait de la religion. L'histoire chrétienne a été ponctuée par une succession de débats, de querelles et de luttes, mais, comme l'observe Mark Wallinger : « Que nous considérions ou non Jésus comme une divinité, il était en tout état de cause un chef politique. »

Ces lignes de partage, Bosch et Bruegel les voient dans toute leur violence, l'un tournant pour toujours le regard en arrière dans la contemplation de la perte et de la destruction, l'autre s'efforçant de déplacer les lignes mais sans jamais finir par les franchir. Mais tous deux rapportent le récit chrétien dans ce qu'il a de fondamental, ses défis et ses consolations, lorsqu'ils dépeignent le pèlerinage de la vie et la destination du voyage ; leurs représentations de la mort sont une invitation à la vie, les tableaux qui la figurent disent combien il peut être difficile d'accepter cette invitation, et toute la mesure dans laquelle, en invitant le spectateur à en comprendre la signification, il lui faut entreprendre la tâche d'être homme ici-bas.

Les deux artistes explorent de même la nature du pouvoir. L'action politique de ce pouvoir, Bosch l'a par exemple mis en scène sous la forme des bourreaux du Christ dans le *Couronnement d'épines* de la National Gallery à Londres – toute la société médiévale y est convoquée sous les traits de souverains, ecclésiastiques, marchands et paysans. Bruegel envoie un message aux autocrates oppresseurs et déconnectés du réel, leur signifie qu'ils doivent se rendre à l'évidence qu'une idée nouvelle ne peut pas être tenue sous le boisseau pour toujours, quelle que soit leur incapacité à modérer la brutalité et la démesure de leur réaction face à elle. C'est ce qui explique la rage que provoque l'idée qu'un enfant nouveau-né puisse usurper le pouvoir du souverain dans le *Massacre des Innocents* de Hampton Court, un tableau qui fait penser au massacre de la multitude d'hommes, de jeunes gens et d'autres innocents pendant la guerre des Balkans. Dans de tels tableaux, Bruegel a pénétré le passé pour mettre en lumière le présent, et ainsi a créé des images universelles. La vie inspirée de Bruegel nous inspire à son tour.

Une réponse remplie d'une telle imagination est un exercice spirituel, un effort créatif en vue de comprendre ce qui est au cœur d'une chose. Comme l'a dit Daniel à propos de Dieu : « Il révèle des choses profondes et cachées, et sait ce qu'il y a dans l'obscurité ». Le cœur est le lieu où se mènent toutes les batailles importantes – mais il faut parfois passer par l'imagination d'un artiste pour communiquer aux autres les nouvelles de ce front. De façon chacun très différente, ces deux artistes se considéraient comme des combattants aux avant-postes, des soldats du Christ.

4 Le paysage – un paradis retrouvé

Selon Mark Meadow, « aux yeux de van Mander, Bruegel constitue le point de synthèse par excellence entre les deux grandes lignes de l'art des Pays-Bas, l'*imitatio* de la nature et l'*imitatio* de l'esprit et des émotions de l'homme ». S'il a été ce point, c'est parce qu'il a fini par quitter l'ombre de Bosch pour lequel il a travaillé longtemps sur l'ordre de Jérôme Cock, un des grands entrepreneurs artistiques de son époque, possédant une imprimerie et une maison d'édition, *Aux Quatre Vents*, et produisant des œuvres d'art pour un marché sur lequel la bourgeoisie avait rejoint l'élite culturelle. Cette ombre avait le champ gravitationnel d'une énorme étoile noire qui a surplombé la moitié de la carrière de Bruegel. Si Bosch était homme à projeter une ombre, Bruegel pendant tout ce temps a été une ombre sans nom. Une fois qu'il a pu y échapper, il a travaillé sans relâche jusqu'à la fin de sa courte vie.

L'emploi du paysage est l'une des plus grandes innovations de Bruegel, une innovation qui reste difficile à interpréter. Rompant avec la tradition iconographique, il nous a donné une vision contemporaine et tangible du monde naturel. Je suis d'avis que ces paysages devraient être lus autant pour leur valeur épistémologique, car ils peuvent contribuer largement à nos connaissances sur son temps.

Le pèlerinage de la vie allait encore une fois être assimilé à un voyage dans l'inconnu, un voyage qui commence très naturellement par des pas hésitants, qui allait mettre sur le chemin celui qui l'entreprend dans un mélange de crainte et d'émerveillement, terrifié à l'idée des malheurs et des échecs possibles, excité à l'idée de tout ce qu'il pourrait découvrir, priant pour que lui soit donné le courage de faire ces premiers pas, tout en étant confiant que, s'il devait hésiter ou se tromper, Dieu lui viendrait en aide. Bruegel n'était pas un homme décidé, il est certain qu'il avançait à pas prudents. Tout comme *Le Vagabond* de Bosch, il nous rappelle que Jésus a dit : « Quiconque me suit puis regarde en arrière n'est pas prêt à aller où je vais ». Ce sont des mots durs. Mais dans un nouveau monde et devant une apparente infinité de choix, il n'en fallait pas moins à Bruegel le courage de prendre des décisions difficiles et de se savoir résolu pour la vie. Le premier optimisme

n'avait pas faibli, malgré la répression qu'il avait appelée. Pourtant, chacun est tenté de regarder en arrière, de penser à ce qui aurait pu être, de demander le courage de poursuivre son chemin vers un avenir incertain, et de rester fidèle pour toute la durée du voyage.

Certains ont vu dans les épisodes religieux peints par Bruegel des événements mineurs placés dans le grand tout de la nature. Il est cependant possible d'y voir des allégories où paysage et humanité se trouvent réunis, la puissance de la nature étant le symbole de la puissance de Dieu. La conversion d'un saint minuscule devant les montagnes et rochers qui l'entourent, des innocents assassinés dans un décor d'horreur et de beauté hivernale, deux personnages sans visage marchant dans un paysage désertique, emmenant leur bébé pour échapper à l'infanticide, un suicide ignoré par deux armées de fourmis dans un majestueux paysage de montagnes, la dure réalité de la vie campagnarde dominée par une nature inflexible, un homme portant sa Croix et qui semble une vignette dans un grand tableau : Bruegel crée toute une œuvre où les personnages principaux sont isolés, petits dans leur environnement, avec comme seule issue la persévérance. Le mieux que nous puissions faire face à une nature hostile est de composer avec elle. Dans le monde de Bruegel, l'apathie est endémique, le sacrifice peut sembler vain, la nature est toute-puissante, l'humanité est sans importance. Ce monde nous oblige à faire face à notre propre indifférence universelle. La seule autre branche de l'alternative est de se résigner à tomber dans l'oubli.

L'art du signifier

Explicitement et circonscrire la signification exacte de l'œuvre de Bosch et de Bruegel, c'est une des gageures de l'histoire de l'art, un combat sanglant auquel la recherche s'adonne depuis toujours dans une compétition sans merci. Étudier l'histoire de l'art, c'est un peu comme prendre en marche un film qui a déjà commencé. On commence par ne pas savoir ce qui s'est déjà passé, et en cherchant à s'y retrouver en tâtonnant dans le noir, il est inévitable que l'on marche sur le pied de quelqu'un ou qu'à tout le moins on lui bloque le passage. Certains vont vous traiter de noms d'oiseaux, mais la plupart se contenteront de vous glisser un « tsss », de soupirer, de s'écarter et de vous laisser passer votre chemin. Plus souvent encore, ils feront semblant de vous ignorer. Poser une question à cette personne à côté de vous, c'est s'exposer à tout ce que vous voudrez, de la litanie d'intrigues et d'acteurs à la rebuffade. Ainsi vont les choses. Oui, on peut déranger son voisin, son public.

Un public précisément, l'art, s'il doit avoir une signification, en a besoin. La signification réside dans la relation entre l'œuvre d'art et celui qui l'observe. Cette relation se noue sur un entendement culturel que le spectateur injecte dans l'œuvre. Pour l'artiste, la signification de l'œuvre est peut-être tout autre chose, de même que sera différente la signification qu'en produira une génération future. La clé réside dans le patrimoine culturel partagé par le public premier et l'artiste. Lorsque nous disons que nous aimons ceci ou cela mais que nous ne pouvons pas dire précisément ce qu'est et ce qui fait cet attachement, c'est parce que l'expression artistique est reçue, comprise et appréciée sur le mode culturel, quand bien même nous, le public, ne comprendrions pas totalement ce qui nous arrive. Notre intérêt est une réaction émotionnelle comme celle que nous pouvons éprouver au théâtre ou dans une salle de concert. Simplement, cela nous arrive. Saisir cet amour pour une œuvre, on dira qu'on ne peut le faire qu'au travers d'un concept flou, insaisissable. Mais pourtant nous pouvons l'appréhender : il a pour nom réussite.

La façon dont laquelle et le degré auquel un artiste réussit à « fabriquer » du sens va et vient avec le temps ; les publics changent et évoluent et, à chacune de leurs générations, apportent à l'œuvre quelque chose qui pourra entrer en résonance avec le spectateur de façon différente, selon la mesure dans laquelle ce dernier partage les expériences et le fonds culturel de l'artiste. Il y a une transaction entre le créateur et le spectateur, c'est une offre acceptée ou déclinée. C'est de cette culture que proviennent les motifs qui façonnent notre compréhension du monde, de même que la manière, féconde ou moins, dont nous pouvons appréhender l'œuvre d'art. Cependant, l'histoire se crée les yeux tournés vers l'avenir mais s'écrit dans un regard rétrospectif. C'est pourquoi il nous est souvent donné de connaître les fins avant de nous attacher aux commencements, et de ce fait, il nous est interdit de retrouver ce moment où seul le commencement était connu.

L'histoire de l'art, ce moment, c'est tenter précisément de le retrouver – quand ceux qui ont entrepris de jouer la scène, pas plus que nous, n'en connaissaient la fin.

Traduit en français par Karel Vermeyen

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Like history, all art history is a product of its time, and this dissertation is no exception to that rule. One's ideas are always overtaken by the passage of time, the research currently being undertaken by the Bosch 500 project being a case in point. During the last few years whilst I have been preparing my thesis, this has been especially true with ever more books appearing, exhibitions staged, conferences being held and, perhaps most amazingly, paintings by Pieter Bruegel, and Pieter Brueghel the Younger being rediscovered. We await a rediscovered Jheronimus Bosch.

I have done my best to keep abreast of events. In the course of this adventure I have accumulated many debts. I am specially grateful to the following – the staff of the library at the Courtauld Institute in London; Doctors John Hinz in London and Natalie Dadoun in Avranches, both of whom helped me conquer the enemy within; the late Charles Rush, the art master who took me to see the exhibitions in the Tate Gallery, and probably more in hope than expectation, 'opened the door that let the future in'; various friends in the Netherlands, including Peter Kersten and Femke, who first put me in touch with Ilja Veldman in Amsterdam who in turn suggested I go to Leiden and contact Reindert Falkenburg to start with; Reindert who gave me the opportunity, Kitty Zijlmans who helped more than she realised when I was lost and suggested I contact Jos Koldewij, and Jos of whom words are not enough, because he epitomises the qualities one seeks but does not always find at university, a passion for his subject, an open and relentlessly enquiring mind, responsive to new ideas particularly those with which he may disagree. It was both a pleasure and privilege to be one of his graduate students. Without Reindert this would never have been written, his spirit imbues the book; without Kitty it might not have been rewritten, and without Jos it would never have been rewritten again, and again, and again, in the light of his sympathetic, penetrating and invaluable criticism. If there is any merit here it is due to his kindness and patience, whilst any faults, failings, and inaccuracies are the author's alone.

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Typeface

The potential beauty and power of books is something that is easily taken for granted these days. The pleasure of appreciating every nuance of the creative marriage of image, text, type, print, paper and binding has all but disappeared from many people's lives. Far more than its content, what once registered was a book's physical presence: its smell, touch, shape, colour, and sound. Sound? I well remember a publisher at Lund Humphries dropping a bulking dummy for a book onto his desk and asking me what I thought of the sound. Was it right? Was it substantial enough?

However well we may have learned to disdain packaging, and desire language alone to work its magic, we may retain a lingering attachment to books as things from which we can derive real pleasure from fonts and paper, and the bindings of special editions. This has now gone further with the creation of a highly collectible genre of art that gives the world of books a new dimension. Book art is a curious category, a largely 20th century invention that even encompasses sculpture inspired by the content. In France, regional arts bodies sponsor the production of art books. William Blake first set out to bypass traditional publishers at the end of the 18th century when he wrote, illustrated, printed, coloured and bound his own works. In the 20th century, Vollard initiated his prized publications in collaboration with Picasso and Matisse. Here I can only make one specific contribution by ensuring that the typeface used is as close to something produced in the Low Countries at the time I am writing about.

Who cares about type? I do for one. The characters who populate the history of typography helped kick-start the two great technological and social revolutions that shaped western society for the last 500 years. Revolution was anything but their objective. Type was something most of them stumbled across while searching for something else. That is another story. Why is this thesis set in Garamond? The world of type includes what most typographers think of as a 'Garamuddle', so many versions of the typeface exist. However, Garamond is the oldest type that in one form or another is still in common use today, and it is a face that originated in the lifetime of Bosch and Bruegel. Typographically it was the highlight of the 16th century.

Claude Garamond (c1480-1561) cut type for the Parisian printer Robert Estienne in the first half of the 16th century. His work was based on the designs of De Aetna by Francisco Griffo for Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1495. Garamond's first typeface design was used in an edition of *Paraphrasis in Elegantiarum Libros Laurentii Vallae* by Erasmus. After Garamond's death his punches and matrices made their way to the Plantin printworks in Antwerp. They are still there in the Plantin-Moretus Museum. Robert Granjon (1513-1589) who worked for Plantin from 1563 until 1570, is generally credited with responsibility for the earliest italic versions of Garamond.

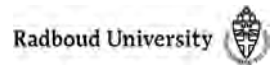
Out of the present day muddle, there are principally three versions of Garamond available that are close to the original, Stempel Garamond issued in 1925, Adobe Garamond from 1989, and Berthold Garamond designed by Günter Gerhard Lange in 1972 and revised in 2006.

This book is set in Berthold Garamond, generously given to me by Signum Art in Paris. My thanks to Malcolm John at Signum for his help in making a difficult choice relatively easy, and his polite observation, "everyone has their own ideas as to the perfect Garamond." Thanks also to Barry Dunnage, a great typographer and designer, a dear friend and one-time colleague, who oversaw the typography and page make-up of this volume with all his usual flair and force of personality.

The interludes are set in Akzidenz Grotesk a typeface first issued in 1858 by the Berlin typefoundry Berthold. It was developed from a face designed by Ferdinand Theinhardt for the scientific publications of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences. The typeface in use today was developed by Günter Gerhard Lange who produced a series of contemporary versions from the 1950s onwards. Akzidenz Grotesk became the basis of many of the most popular sans serif typefaces now in use, including Neue Haas Grotesk, designed by Max Miedinger in 1957, and launched as Helvetica by Stempel in 1961. It is no coincidence that both the typefaces used in this book were designed by Lange. 'GG' was one of the most important typographers of the 20th century, dubbed *Das Maschinengewehr Gutenbergs* by Manfred Klein, he was a master craftsman, a great teacher, a stern taskmaster, and great fun to be with once you knew him, as I was privileged to do through the *Association Typographique Internationale* in the 1970s and 80s. He died in 2008, aged 87.

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