

# STILL LOOKING FOR PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER

By  
Jamie Lee Edwards

A thesis submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of  
M.Phil(B) in the History of Art

School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music  
University of Birmingham  
2013

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## ABSTRACT

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1526-69) is one of the most renowned sixteenth-century Netherlandish artists. Paradoxically, however, he is also one of the most mysterious and our dearth of known historical information about Bruegel has generated much debate about how his art relates to the religious and political conflicts raging in the Low Countries during the 1560s. Most previous scholarship has attempted to place Bruegel's allegiances on one side or the other of a Catholic versus Protestant binary, and attempted to demonstrate that Bruegel's art was conceived and understood as partisan propaganda. By taking a reception-focused approach, this thesis seeks to address this shortcoming in Bruegel scholarship. Chapter 1 is primarily concerned with the intended audience for Bruegel's art, their beliefs and the ways in which they displayed and interpreted art. Chapters 2 and 3 each then focus on a single painting by Bruegel, the *Carrying of the Cross* (1564) and the *Blind Leading the Blind* (1568), which are treated as case-studies for the ways in which Bruegel's imagery was originally understood and interpreted. I will argue that Bruegel's paintings were originally set-up as discussion pieces, designed to stimulate tolerant discussion in the domestic environment with a view to promoting Christian morality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to David Hemsoll, University of Birmingham, whose support and criticism has contributed immensely to this thesis. It was David's Undergraduate classes on European Art 1400-1500 and Michelangelo that sparked my interest in Renaissance painting, which has since become so absorbing.

I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth L'Estrange, also at Birmingham, for helping to translate several Latin, French and Dutch inscriptions that feature on some of the sixteenth-century engravings considered in this thesis.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the staff at the National Gallery archive and at the Warburg Institute for their assistance and co-operation.

And finally to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), who funded this project.



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# Introduction:

## STILL “LOOKING” FOR PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER\*

‘Who is this new Jerome Bosch, come into the world, who imitates [Bosch’s]... style so ably that in the meantime has even exceeded him? Pieter gains in spirit just as his art grows more fruitful... he is equal, and deserves to be praised, no less than any other artist.’<sup>1</sup>

‘This is Bruegel... If only art had the ability to render his manners and his spirit, no image in the world would be more beautiful.’<sup>2</sup>

Who was Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1526<sup>3</sup>-1569)? Since very little is known about Bruegel, this question has proven difficult to answer. It was first asked in 1572 by Domenicus Lampsonius, whose laudatory epigram, partially quoted above, accompanied (?)Johannes Wiericx’s engraved portrait of Bruegel<sup>4</sup> (fig. 1) and began by asking ‘Who is this new Jerome Bosch...?’<sup>5</sup> Lampsonius continued to praise Bruegel for having surpassed in art his famous forebear Bosch, and

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\*To borrow Perez Zagorin’s phrasing, see below n.27.

<sup>1</sup> D. Lampsonius, ‘Pieter Bruegel’ in the *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies*, 1572, plate 19. Quoted from R. van Bastelaer, *Catalogue raisonné des estampes de Pierre Bruegel l’ancien*, Brussels, 1908, S. Gilchrist (trans. and ed.), San Francisco, 1992, 3.

<sup>2</sup> This quotation is taken from a quatrain added to Lampsonius’s verse around 1600 by an anonymous author, see J. Briels, ‘Amator Pictoriae Artis: De Antwerpse kunstverzamelaar Peeter Stevens (1590-1668) en zijn constkamer’, *Jaarboek van het koninklijke museum voor schoone kunsten antwerpen*, (1980), 137-226.

<sup>3</sup> Bruegel’s exact date of birth is not known. Convention has it that Bruegel was born in the mid- to late-1520s, based on the fact that artists usually enrolled with the guild of St. Luke at Antwerp aged between 21 and 25 and the entry ‘Peeter Brueghels, schilder’ appears in the *liggeren* of the guild of St. Luke in 1551/52, see P. F. Rombouts and T. van Lerius, *De liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche Sint Lucas gilde, onder zinspreuk*, Antwerp, 1872-76, 175. F. Grossmann, whose 1955 monograph on Bruegel is still essential reading, agreed with this approximation, adding that Bruegel looks around 40 years old in the engraved portrait of him featuring in Lampsonius’s *Pictorum* (see above n.1). If it is indeed reasonable to adduce that Bruegel looks around 40 years old in the engraving and that this image captured his likeness near death, then Grossmann thought it provides further evidence in support of Bruegel’s birth date to around 1526-30, see Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel. Complete Edition of the Paintings*, 3rd edition, London, 1973, 12-13.

Two Dutch scholars, however, have attempted to fix Bruegel’s date of birth more precisely to 1527/28 based on a ingenious—if not a little convoluted—interpretation of an ‘allegorical’ portrait of Bruegel that was published by Egidius Sadeler in 1606, see J. B. Bedaux and A. van Gool, ‘Bruegel’s Birthyear, motive of an Ars/Natura transmutation’, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VII (1974), 133-56. R. van Schoute and H. Verougstraete, however, have argued that Bruegel was born in 1526, based on a copy of Bruegel’s *Triumph of Death* (c.1562) by Pieter II Brueghel that is signed and dated 1626. This picture features several banners in the background that are emblazoned with ‘1526’, which the author’s postulate was intended as a memorial to the Elder Bruegel’s year of birth, see van Schoute and Verougstraete, *Pieter Breughel der Jüngere-Jan Brueghel der Ältere. Flämische Malerei um 1600. Tradition und Fortschritt*, exh. cat. Villa Hügel, Essen, Lingen, 1997, 106-11. Suffice it to say that either argument served only to confirm what scholars had for some decades already supposed likely.

<sup>4</sup> The *Pictorum* (see above n.1) was published in 1572 by Hieronymus Cock’s widow Volcxken Dierckx. The engravings in the *Pictorum* are now generally attributed to Wiericx, who was in the employ of Cock’s publishing house, see N. M. Orenstein, ‘The Elusive Life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder’, in Orenstein (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Drawings and Prints*, exh. cat., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, May - August 2001 and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, September - December 2001, London and New York, 2001, 3. On Wiericx’s oeuvre and activities, see M. Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les Estampes des Wierix Conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier*, Brussels, 1982, III, 345; P. Wescher, ‘Jan van Hemessen und Jan van Amstel’, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XII (1970), 50. And on the *Pictorum* and its engravings, see J. Piet Filedt Kok, ‘Artists portrayed by their friends: Goltzius and his circle’, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXIV (1996), 161-81; S. Meiers, ‘Portraits in Print: Hieronymus Cock, Domenicus Lampsonius, and “Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies”’, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LXIX (2006), 1-16; B. Bakker and M. Hoyle, ‘Pictores, adeste! Hieronymus Cock recommending his print series’, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXXIII (2007/08), 53-66.

<sup>5</sup> Lampsonius (as in n.1), 3.

Bruegel's esteem among his contemporaries is abundantly clear. In the eulogy that Abraham Ortelius wrote (c.1573) to his friend Bruegel, for example, the artist is described as the 'most perfect painter' of the entire sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup> And in the second above quotation, which is taken from a quatrain that was added to Lampsonius's verse on a reproduction of Wiericx's engraving dateable to around 1600, an anonymous author praises Bruegel's 'manners' and 'spirit' highly, describing how if art had the ability to capture these then this artwork would be the most beautiful ever created.<sup>7</sup> Bruegel was also listed as an artist of renown in Lodovico Guicciardini's *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (1567).<sup>8</sup> He was mentioned in Giorgio Vasari's *Vite* (1568).<sup>9</sup> And a biography of Bruegel appeared in Karel van Mander's *Het Schilder-boeck* (1604).<sup>10</sup>

Given such stature, it is a paradox that we know so little about Bruegel. Scanty records cover only 19 years of his life and the historical record is silent about his religious and political beliefs. Bruegel's exact date or place of birth is unknown<sup>11</sup> and nothing is known for certain about his training, apart from van Mander's assertion that he was apprenticed to Pieter Coeck van Aelst (1502-1550).<sup>12</sup> Bruegel is first positively documented in 1550 at Mechelen where he collaborated with Pieter Baltens (c.1526-84) on the production of an altarpiece (lost); Baltens

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<sup>6</sup> Ortelius, 'PETRUM BRUEGELIUM PICTOREM', c.1573. Ortelius's epitaph to Bruegel featured in his *Album Amicorum*, which was compiled between 1574 and '96, and is quoted here in translation from W. Stechow, *Northern Renaissance Art 1400-1600. Sources and Documents*, Illinois, 1999, 37. Ortelius and Bruegel's friendship was first recognised by A. E. Popham who first published the eulogy, see, Popham, 'Pieter Bruegel and Abraham Ortelius', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, LIX (Oct., 1931), 184-88. On the *Album Amicorum*, see J. Harris, 'The Practice of Community: Humanist Friendship during the Dutch Revolt', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, XXXVII (Winter, 2005), 299-325.

<sup>7</sup> See above, n.2.

<sup>8</sup> L. Guicciardini, *Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferior*, Antwerp, 1567.

<sup>9</sup> G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, 1568, A. Hinds (trans.), E. Rhys (ed.), London and New York, 1927, Vol IV, 353.

<sup>10</sup> Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem, 1604, fols. 233<sup>r</sup> – 234<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> On the date, see above n.3. There is long-standing debate about whether "Bruegel" is a toponym, referring to Bruegel's place of birth, or is a patronym, the surname that he inherited from his father. With regards the former hypothesis, it was van Mander who wrote that Bruegel came from a village called 'Brueghel' in the Brabant 'not far from Breda', see van Mander, fol.233<sup>r</sup>. Two such named villages existed in the 1500s but neither of these was close to Breda and one of them, Brögel, was situated in the Bishopric of Liège, that is, outside the Netherlandish provinces. Neither possibility is therefore viable. On the other hand, Bruegel was a common family name before the time of our artist, and the style of Bruegel's name in the *ligerren* of the Guild of St. Luke, which reads 'Brueghels' with an 's', is consistent with the style customarily used to denote "the son of", as opposed "from the place of", see R. Genaille, 'Carel van Mander et la jeunesse de Bruegel l'Ancien', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijke museum voor schone kunsten Antwerpen*, (1982), 128-31; M. J. Friedländer, *Die altniederländische Malerei. Bd. 14, Pieter Bruegel und Nachträge zu den früheren Bänden* Leiden, 1937, H. Norden (trans.), Leiden and Brussels, 1976, XIV, 13; Grossmann, 10-11. Manfred Sellink has accordingly suggested that Bruegel could well have been born in a city, perhaps even Antwerp, see M. Sellink, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings, Drawings and Prints*, Ludion, 2007, 2.

<sup>12</sup> There has been much debate about van Mander's claim that Bruegel was apprenticed as a painter to van Aelst, largely because of little formal affinities between Bruegel and the older painter's work. G. Marlier, however, published a piece of evidence that may support van Mander's claim. In 1628 Francis Sweerts transcribed van Aelst's now-lost epitaph, which included the phrase '*Discipulum habuit Petrum Bruegehlum Pictorem, cui filiam in uxorem dedit*' (He had a disciple, Peter Bruegel the painter, to whom he gave his daughter in marriage), see Marlier, *Pierre Coeck d'Alost*, Brussels, 1966, 31. Edouard Michel has also drawn some comparisons between van Aelst's and Bruegel's methods of composition, see E. Michiel, 'Pierre Bruegel le Vieux et Pieter Coecke d'Alost', *Mélanges Hulin de Loo*, Brussels, 1931, 266-71.

painted the interior, Bruegel the outside shutters in grisaille.<sup>13</sup> This triptych was due for delivery in October 1551.<sup>14</sup> Bruegel then joined the painter's Guild of St. Luke at Antwerp, at some point before October '52.<sup>15</sup> At this time, Bruegel was aged about 25. Bruegel seems immediately to have left Antwerp for Italy and was in Rome by 1553,<sup>16</sup> where he befriended and collaborated with Giulio Clovio (1498-1578).<sup>17</sup> By 1556 he was back in Antwerp working<sup>18</sup> for Hieronymus Cock (1518-70), supplying original and Bosch-esque drawings that were published as engravings by Cock's publishing house "Aux Quatre Vents".<sup>19</sup> The record is then silent until

<sup>13</sup> The altarpiece was sub-contracted to Bruegel and Baltens by the dealer Claude Dorizi, who oversaw its completion on behalf of its sponsors, the city's Glovemakers' Guild. Bruegel's grisailles showed Ss. Rombout and Gommaire, see A. Monballieu, 'Pieter Bruegel en het altaar van de Mechelse Handschoenmakers (1551)', *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Kring voor Oudheidkunde, Letteren en Kunst van Mechelen*, LXVIII (1964), 92-110; R. Marijnissen and M. Seidel, *Bruegel*, New York, 1984, 16.

<sup>14</sup> N. Büttner, 'Quid Siculas sequeris per mille pericula terras?' Ein Beitrag zur Biographie Pieter Bruegels d. Ä. und zur Kulturgeschichte der niederländischen Italienreise', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 27. Bd., (2000), 209-42, esp. 208-9.

<sup>15</sup> The entry reads: 'A° 1551. In 't jaer Ons Heeren doen men screef XV° ende een en vijftich doen waeren Dekens ende Rhegeerders van S. Lucasgulde, Gommaer van Eerenbroeck [ende] Kerstiaen van den Queeckborne, ende hier na volghen haer vrijmeesters die zy ontfangen hebben in 't jaer voorscreven...'. Among the 22 artists that are subsequently listed as having joined the guild that year appears 'Peeter Brueghels, schilder', quoted from Rombouts and van Lierus, 175.

<sup>16</sup> Several prints showing scenes in Rome purportedly after Bruegel's drawings carry the inscription 'Petrus Bruegel fec: Romae A° 1553', see Orenstein, 6; Grossmann, 16. Although the authenticity of this drawing has at times been unnecessarily doubted, the drawing titled *View of the Rippa Grande in Rome* is, however, the only extant autograph piece of visual evidence confirming Bruegel's stay in Rome, see M. Winner *et al.*, *Pieter Bruegel d.Ä. als Zeichner: Herkunft und Nachfolge*, exh. cat., Kuperstichkabinett, Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 1975, cat. no. 26. Büttner has convincingly reconstructed the likely route Bruegel followed from Antwerp to Rome according to contemporary guidebooks, travel itineraries and the known movements of contemporaries. Bartholomeus Spranger, for instance, set off for Italy from Antwerp in March 1565, travelling via Lyons, and the route he followed is probably the one advised in Charles Estienne's *Guide to the Paths of France*, published in 1552. Bruegel must also have taken this route, since a *View of Lyons* by Bruegel in watercolours (lost) is documented in the inventory of Giulio Clovio, see Grossmann, 16. From Lyons travellers had the option of trans-continental travel to Italy across the Alps, or could board a boat destined for the Italian peninsula. Bruegel seems to have opted for the latter, as the drawing showing *Reggio Burning* (c.1560) suggests that he witnessed the 1552 siege of Reggio di Calabria in southern Italy, from where he could have travelled north to Rome, see Büttner, 213-17.

<sup>17</sup> The 1578 inventory made of Clovio's estate documents that he owned a *Tower of Babel* on Ivory and a *View of Lyons* in watercolours on linen by Bruegel. Moreover, the inventory indicates that Clovio had collaborated with Bruegel, since the notary lists several miniatures made by Bruegel ('*Un quadretto di miniatura la metà fatto per mano sua et altra da M° Pietro Brugole*'), see Grossmann, 16, 25; J. Morra, 'Utopia Lost: Allegory, Ruins and Pieter Bruegel's Towers of Babel', *Art History*, XXX (2007), 200. C. de Tolnay attributed several miniatures to Bruegel's hand that came from Clovio's shop, see de Tolnay, 'Newly discovered miniatures by Pieter Bruegel the Elder', *The Burlington Magazine*, CVII (Mar., 1956), 110-5; idem, 'Further miniatures by Pieter Bruegel the Elder', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXII (Sep., 1980), 616-23. De Tolnay's assertion in the later of these articles that Bruegel collaborated with Clovio on the *Farnese Hours*, however, has been disproven on the basis that the *Farnese Hours* was completed in 1546—several years prior to Bruegel's arrival in Rome, see J. ten Brink Goldsmith, 'Pieter Bruegel and the Matter of Italy', *The Sixteenth-century Journal*, XXIII (Summer, 1992), 209<sup>15</sup>; N. W. Canedy, 'Pieter Bruegel or Giulio Clovio?', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXIII (Jan., 1981), 35.

<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Bruegel was working for Cock prior to his trip to Italy. Upon his return to Antwerp from Mechelen in 1551 (see Büttner), Bruegel would have needed to secure patronage in Antwerp. That this was provided by Cock is suggested by the fact that Bruegel's name appears in the *ligerren* of the Guild of St. Luke inbetween two of Cock's employees who became masters in 1551-52 thanks to Cock's efforts: Giogrio Ghisi and Michiel Cock, see van Bastelaer, 15<sup>11</sup>. This might explain Bruegel's sudden departure from Antwerp, since Cock could have sponsored Bruegel's trip to Italy on the condition that Bruegel made drawings to be engraved upon return, which indeed happened with the *Large Landscapes* series that was engraved by Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum and published by Cock c.1555-56, see Orenstein cat. nos. 22-34, pp. 120-35.

<sup>19</sup> W. S. Gibson, 'Some Flemish popular prints from Hieronymus Cock and his contemporaries', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXX (Dec., 1978), 673-81; Bakker and Hoyle, 53-66; Meiers, 1.

1563, when Bruegel resurfaced in Brussels and married Marie Verhulst,<sup>20</sup> the daughter of van Aelst and Maaike Verhulst Bessemers, who was herself an accomplished painter.<sup>21</sup> With Marie, Bruegel fathered three—possibly four<sup>22</sup>—children, and his two sons Pieter II (c.1564/65 - 1637/38) and Jan I (c.1568 - 1625) also became painters. Bruegel died young in 1569, aged about 43.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, no text of substance is attributable to Bruegel,<sup>24</sup> the likes of which might otherwise have contained precious information about his beliefs.

Although modern art history often gives negligible importance to the artist's biography,<sup>25</sup> the scanty facts about Bruegel's life has decisively shaped previous investigations into Bruegel and his art, which are both mired in controversy. Bruegel's extant oeuvre is large (forty or so paintings, sixty-one drawings and eighty-four prints that acknowledge '*Bruegel inuentor*'<sup>26</sup>) but scholarly attempts to gauge how this wealth of visual material reveals Bruegel's beliefs have been hampered by our lack of historical information. Perez Zagorin thus observed a 'general problem of interpreting Bruegel' in his 2003 article titled 'Looking for Pieter Bruegel'.<sup>27</sup> Emphasising that 'one cannot help wondering what attitudes, values, and particular philosophy underly [Bruegel's] art', Zagorin demonstrated how authors have seldom managed to achieve consensus on such matters, concluding that no other sixteenth century artist is 'understood in such different and opposite ways'.<sup>28</sup> Earlier critics expressed similar views. In 1958 Roberto Salvini called the interpretation of Bruegel's art 'one of the most arduous tasks a critic can

<sup>20</sup> In the register of marriages conducted in Summer 1563 in Notre-Dame de la Chapelle, Brussels, appears the names 'Peeter Bruegel' and 'Mayken Cocks', see P. Bianconi, 'Outline Biography', in R. Hughes and Bianconi, *The complete paintings of Bruegel*, London, 1969, 86.

<sup>21</sup> Maaike's status as a respected watercolourist and illuminator is known to us almost solely because of Guicciardini, who praised her in his *Descrittione*, see above n.8; K. Kilinski II, 'Bruegel on Icarus: Inversions of the Fall', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LXVII (2004), 105.

<sup>22</sup> Bruegel had two sons, Pieter and Jan, who definitely had one sister, Maria, who was baptised in 1566. It is possible that Bruegel also fathered a second girl, Catharina. Details surrounding her life, however, are scarce and Catharina could have been the daughter of Pieter van Bruegel, a surgeon at Brussels alive at the same time as our artist, see R. Marijnissen and H. Rombaut, 'Bruegel', *Koninklijke Academieën van België. Nationaal Biografisch Woorden-boek*, Bussels, XIX (2009), col. 120.

<sup>23</sup> The year of Bruegel's death is known to us because of the funerary monument that Jan Brueghel erected in honour of his father at Notre-Dame de la Chapelle, Brussels, which was inscribed 'PETRO BRUEGELIO/...OBIIT ILLE ANNO MDLXIX', quoted from Orenstein, 10<sup>29</sup>; Marijnissen (1984), 58<sup>46</sup>. Bruegel's age at death is here calculated on the basis that he was born in 1526, see above n.3.

<sup>24</sup> The proverb appended to the *Beekeepers* drawing (discussed below) is sometimes considered autograph, see K. Renger, *Pieter Bruegel d. A. als Zeichner Herkunft und Nachfolge*, Berlin, 1975, 86-87; J. R. Judson, *The Age of Bruegel*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1986, 105; and most recently upheld in Orenstein *et al.*, cat. no. 107, 238ff. However, other scholars have rejected the inscription's autograph status, for example W. Vanbeselaere, *Peter Bruegel en het Nederlandsche Maniërisme*, Tiel, 1944, 85; K. Boström, 'Das Sprichwort vom Vogelneest', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, XVIII (1949), 87-88. The matter of whether the inscriptions appended to Bruegel's drawings, intended to be reproduced as engravings, are autograph is discussed by L. Münz, *Bruegel. The Drawings*, London, 1961, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Prompted largely by R. Barthes seminal essay 'The Death of the Author', *Image-music-text*, Glasgow, 1977, 148.

<sup>26</sup> Sixty-one drawings are accepted as being autograph since Hans Mielke's catalogue raisonné published in 1996, which removed many spurious attributions from Bruegel's oeuvre, see Mielke, *Pieter Bruegel: Die Zeichnungen*, Turnhout, 1996. The corpus of drawings and prints is reproduced and discussed in Orenstein *et al.*, passim. Martin Royalton-Kisch, furthermore, has suggested that Bruegel's surviving drawings represent only 1 percent of his total original output, see Kisch, 'Pieter Bruegel as a Draftsman: The Changing Image', in Orenstein *et al.*, 13-41, esp. 30-31. The catalogue of paintings is reproduced by Sellink, passim.

<sup>27</sup> P. Zagorin, 'Looking for Pieter Bruegel', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LXIV (Jan., 2003), 73-96.

<sup>28</sup> Zagorin, 74.

undertake'.<sup>29</sup> And earlier, in 1937, Max J. Friedländer observed how Bruegel's overall philosophy is destined to stubbornly elide art historians, for even if he had one it was apparently not defined by any fixed credo, or else one that is not recoverable.<sup>30</sup> Friedländer's and Salvini's words thus testify to the longevity of the problem.

#### BRUEGEL'S 'CAUSTIC OR DERISORY' ART: PREVIOUS TRENDS AND PROBLEMS IN SCHOLARSHIP

It is the circumstances of Bruegel's life that have given urgency to the ascertaining of his beliefs as few periods in history are as calamitous as Bruegel's was.<sup>31</sup> The ramifications of Luther's reformation earlier in the century were still felt in Bruegel's day, chiefly because of the increasingly proselytizing campaigns of Anabaptists and Calvinists.<sup>32</sup> These religious tensions compromised the sovereignty of the Habsburg ruler of the Netherlands, King Philip II of Spain, whose stringent Catholicism and interference in domestic affairs became increasingly anathema to the Brabantine nobility, who rebelled in 1566.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, most articles or monographs about Bruegel are interested to some degree with how Bruegel was affected by these bitter religious and political disputes and with ascertaining his own allegiances: pro- or anti-Catholic, pro- or anti-Spanish and so on. This is especially so since the development of social art history.<sup>34</sup> Social art history has vehemently disavowed the concepts of the artist-genius and the masterpiece, substituting both with the notion that artists and artworks are socially-contingent entities, subject to and complicit in the workings of ideology.<sup>35</sup> This understanding—that artworks are not 'closed, self contained and transcendent entities' but are instead sites for mediation on social issues encompassing religion, politics, morals etc.<sup>36</sup>—has been particularly influential in Bruegel exegeses, compelling scholars to identify how Bruegel's responses to the disturbances he witnessed are registered in his art.

Nevertheless, no consensus about Bruegel's views has been achieved. Some scholars have maintained that Bruegel was orthodox Catholic and have offered circumstantial and artistic evidence in support. Bruegel was, after all, admired by Catholic prelates including Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517-86), the archbishop of Antwerp, who owned the

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<sup>29</sup> Salvini, *La pittura fiamminga*, Milan, 1958.

<sup>30</sup> Friedländer (as in n.11), 35.

<sup>31</sup> The literature on this matter is vast. A fair summary of the contemporary events and their relevances to Bruegel is provided by I. L. Zupnick, 'Bruegel and the Revolt of the Netherlands', *Art Journal*, XXIII (Summer, 1964), 283-89.

<sup>32</sup> For the best introduction to these matters see G. Parker's classic book *The Dutch Revolt*, London, 1977, esp., 19-118; idem, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, New Haven and London, 1998, 115-47.

<sup>33</sup> Parker (1998), 118ff. Also see M. Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, Zwolle, 2007, 35ff.

<sup>34</sup> As part of the academic movement retroactively called new art history, see B. Stimson, 'Art History after New Art History', *Art Journal*, LXI (Spring, 2002), 93.

<sup>35</sup> Despite its age, a good summary of social art history, its premises, developments, advantages and problems is contained in J. Wolff, *The social production of art*, London, 1981.

<sup>36</sup> Wolff, 49.

*Flight into Egypt* (1563) (fig. 2).<sup>37</sup> Bruegel was given a Catholic funeral.<sup>38</sup> And Philips Galle's engraved *Death of the Virgin* (1574), made after Bruegel's grisaille (c.1564), has been interpreted as a manifestly Catholic image (figs. 3, 4).<sup>39</sup> Others, however, have doubted Bruegel's Catholicism and called him a dissident reformer.<sup>40</sup> Adherents to this school have also offered evidence in the form of two documents. The first is a statement in Ortelius's eulogy, which reads 'Bruegel depicted many things that cannot be depicted.... In all his works more is always implied than is depicted'.<sup>41</sup> This has often been construed to mean covert religious and political critique. The second is an altogether more evocative statement made by van Mander. Commencing at the bottom of folio 233<sup>v</sup> in *Het Schilder-Boeck*,<sup>42</sup> van Mander wrote that on his deathbed Bruegel ordered his wife to destroy certain drawings by him because of their 'caustic or derisory' content, which could have got her into trouble with the Catholic authorities.<sup>43</sup> Here, van Mander probably had in mind specifically the Catholic tribunal instituted in Brussels in 1567 by the Duke of Alba, known as the *Bloedraad* (Council of Blood).<sup>44</sup> Alba's Council was conceived to extirpate heresy following the rebellion and the iconoclastic riots (*Beeldenstorm*) that swept the Netherlands in 1566,<sup>45</sup> and many heretics were executed under the 'Iron Duke's'

<sup>37</sup> Grossmann, 26-7, 30. We cannot be sure, however, that Granvelle acquired his Bruegels directly from Bruegel in the first instance because they are first documented in Granvelle's possession some years after Bruegel's death in 1572, when Granvelle attempted to recover artworks that had been looted that year from his archiepiscopal palace at Mechelen. Following the siege, Granvelle issued special orders for the tracking down of his Bruegels, but in a letter written to Granvelle dated 9th September 1572 from Provost Morillon, Morillon regretfully informed the Cardinal that Bruegel's paintings were rarer and costlier than ever, advising Granvelle to not 'count on finding any more works by Bruegel except at a very high price', C. Piot (ed.) *Correspondance du Cardinal Granvelle*, Brussels, 1884, IV, 524; D. Allart, 'Heeft Pieter Brueghel de Jonge de schilderijen van zijnvader kunnen bestuderen? Methodologische en kritische beschouwingen', P. Van den Brinkt *et al.*, *De Firma Brueghel*, exh. cat., Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht and Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels, 2001 – 2002, Brussels, 2001, 49, 49. Bruegel's paintings were indeed infamously rare in the decades following his death and by the turn of the 1600s they were impossible to come by on the open market, and were largely kept shut away in aristocratic collections. Evidence for this comes from a letter written in 1609 by Jan Brueghel to Cardinal Borromeo of Milan, in response to Borromeo's request to acquire a painting by Bruegel's hand from him. Jan politely declined to do so, however, writing that this would mean relinquishing possession of the only painting that he owned by his father's hand, the *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* grisaille, see Bedaux and van Gool, 142<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> At Notre Dame de la Chapelle, see above n.23; Marijnissen (1984), 58<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> W. S. Melion, "Ego enim quasi obdormivi hr': Salvation and Blessed Sleep in Philip Galle's *Death of the Virgin* after Pieter Bruegel," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXXVII (1996), 14-53; and on Galle's engraving after Bruegel's grisaille see Orenstein *et al.*, no.117, 258-61.

<sup>40</sup> See Marijnissen's excellent summary, Marijnissen, (1984), 24-36.

<sup>41</sup> Ortelius (as in n.6). Quoted from M. A. Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs and the practice of rhetoric*, Zwolle, 2002, 109.

<sup>42</sup> I have consulted the translated and edited volumes compiled by H. Miedema (trans. and ed.), *The Lives of Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters by Karel van Mander*, 6 Vols, Doornspijk, 1994. Miedema's reproduces the *Schilder-Boeck* in facsimile format along with English translation, commentary, annotations and introductory essays.

<sup>43</sup> The relevant passage in full reads:

One sees many unusual inventions of symbolic subjects in [Bruegel's] witty work in print; but he had still many more, neatly and carefully drawn with some captions on them, some of which he got his wife to burn when he was on his deathbed because they were too caustic or derisory, either because he was sorry or that he was afraid that on their account she would get into trouble or she might have to answer to them.

Quoted from Miedema (1994), I, 193-4.

<sup>44</sup> See Parker (1977), 99-117; H. Kamen, *The Duke of Alba*, New Haven and London, 2004, 75-106.

<sup>45</sup> Erupted on the 5th April 1566, see Parker (1977), 68-75.

regime.<sup>46</sup> Significantly, Alba's *Bloedraad* also supervised the production of literature, drama and art and severely punished the authors of anything heterodox that it discovered.<sup>47</sup>

Both Ortelius's and van Mander's words have thus been invoked to justify the view that Bruegel had radical beliefs and that they are manifested in his art. Jetske Sybesma, for example, cited van Mander's 'reliable' 'caustic or derisory' comment at the beginning of her analysis of Bruegel's *Beekeepers* (fig. 5), which she argued contains political connotations satirising the Catholic church and the Habsburgs.<sup>48</sup> By utilising the apparently common metaphor in the 1500s of beehives for the Catholic church, Sybesma proposed that this drawing represents Catholics attempting to restore order to the churches that had been plundered during the *Beeldenstorm*.<sup>49</sup> Aside to this general topical dimension of the imagery, however, she also adduced specifically anti-Catholic connotations from other motifs in the picture. These include the boy climbing a tree and gazing at the distant church, which she interprets as a heroic representation of Protestants who had escaped Alba's tyranny and now strove for a reformed religion.<sup>50</sup>

Similar readings have been offered of Bruegel's paintings. Stanley Ferber, for instance, also quoted van Mander in an older article in which he proposed a much more literal and overt nature to the political elements in Bruegel's art than Sybesma adduces from the *Beekeepers*.<sup>51</sup> Having compared the figure dressed in black at the centre of the *Massacre of the Innocents* in Vienna to portraits of Alba (figs. 6-8), Ferber concluded that there is a peculiar and compelling likeness between the two. Consequently, he concluded that Bruegel placed a recognisable portrait of Alba in the *Massacre* to draw analogies between the biblical Herod's hubris, who ordered the execution of all the babies in Bethlehem following the birth of Christ, and the Habsburg dynasties' similarly pitiless efforts to retain a Catholic grip on the Low Countries.<sup>52</sup>

As evocative as these interpretations are, they are both encumbered by numerous factual and conceptual flaws, which are representative of shortcomings encountered more

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<sup>46</sup> Alba's regime completely overhauled the basic ternary system of political administration in the Habsburg Netherlands, which depended on cooperation between the central government and the four Estates (the political body that convened to mediate between the Habsburg administration and the three "members" of the Duchy of Brabant: the clergy, nobility and the four incorporated cities of Antwerp, Brussels, Leuven and 's-Hertogenbosch). It was Philip II's increasing interference in matters belonging to the Estates that occasioned the rebellion of the nobles in 1566, who felt that their enshrined constitutional privileges were being unduly impinged upon and whose protestations contributed, in part, to the violent rebellion in 1566. See Thøfner, 37ff.; Parker (1998), ch. 4; Kamen, ch. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Beginning in 1546 printers in Antwerp had been obliged to obtain a licence from the Habsburg government indicating their good conduct and orthodoxy, which was then monitored especially during Alba's tenure as commandor for the Netherlands, see Orenstein, 'Images to Print: Pieter Bruegel's Engagement with Printmaking', in Orenstein *et al.*, 50; Kamen, 75ff.

<sup>48</sup> J. Sybesma, 'The Reception of Bruegel's *Beekeepers*: A Matter of Choice', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII (Sep., 1991), 467-78.

<sup>49</sup> Sybesma, *passim*; Parker (1977); Parker (1998), 121.

<sup>50</sup> Sybesma, 468, 472-3.

<sup>51</sup> S. Ferber, 'Peter Bruegel and the Duke of Alba', *Renaissance News*, XIX (Autumn, 1966), 205-19.

<sup>52</sup> Ferber, 208-11.



generally in Bruegel scholarship. Both interpretations, for instance, are anachronistic. Ferber illustrated his article with one of several versions of the *Massacre* that is not in fact by Bruegel and was painted by Pieter II in the 1590s.<sup>53</sup> The comparisons that Ferber made between Alba and the horseback figure in Pieter II's painting were not particularly compelling (cf. figs. 7, 8), but they are even less-so for Bruegel's original, which is in Hampton Court (fig. 9).<sup>54</sup> The horseback figure in this picture exhibits none of the attributes that gave rise to Ferber's identification this man as Alba (cf. figs. 7, 8, 10). Furthermore, although the original *Massacre* has suffered extensive overpainting done between 1604 and '21,<sup>55</sup> these are unlikely to have altered the appearance of the horseback figure because this campaign was targeted at disguising the bodies of the murdered babies (figs. 11a-11d). Therefore, any associations between horseback figures and Alba in Bruegelian *Massacres* are apparently peculiar—and probably coincidental—to the copies and are absent from the prototype.<sup>56</sup> Finally, although the

<sup>53</sup> At least thirteen faithful copies are known, see C. Currie and D. Allart, *The Brueg[H]el Phenomenon. Paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Brueghel the Younger with a Special Focus on Technique and Copying Practice*, Brussels, 2012, 3 vols, III, 828<sup>14</sup>; K. Ertz, *Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere 1564-1637/38. Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, Lingen, 1998-2000, no. 298. The Vienna picture discussed by Ferber has been dated by dendrochronology, see Demus, Klauner and Schutz, *Flämische Malerei von Jan van Eyck bis Pieter Bruegel d.Ä.*, Vienna, 1981, 118-22. The findings show that the tree from which the panel was cut cannot have been felled much earlier than 1569. Factoring in the removal of sapwood (a median of 15 rings usually), as well as typical seasoning time (10-15 years), produces a terminus post quem of, at the very earliest, 1594 for Pieter II's *Massacre* in Vienna. On dendrochronological analysis, see S. Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, Oxford, 2008, ch. 5, esp. 58-59.

<sup>54</sup> As Lorne Campbell was able to demonstrate by considering the provenance of the painting now at Hampton Court. This picture can be traced to the collection of the Archduke Ernst of Austria, who bequeathed it to his brother, the Emperor Rudolf II, in 1595. Rudolf's collection was plundered in 1648 by the Swedish, after which Rudolf's art entered the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden. When Queen Christina was herself exiled in 1654, she took with her part of her collection, and that this included Bruegel's *Massacre* is confirmed by the fact that William Frizell came into possession of the painting from Christina when she was forced to sell some of her art during her stay in Antwerp or Brussels in 1654-55. It was from Frizell that King Charles II of England purchased the *Massacre* in Breda in 1660. See Campbell, *The Early Flemish Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, Cambridge, 1985, 13ff. The autograph status of the Hampton Court picture was also confirmed by the discovery of faint remnants of a signature by the conservator Amelia Jackson. Pieter II's workshop practices have become clear recently following Curry and Allart's new publication (see above n.53), which comes on the back of many years of research during which key works by Pieter II were subjected to rigorous technical examination. In this publication Currie and Allart have been able to shed much needed light on Pieter II's methods of replication of his father's paintings and the organisation of his shop. It is now clear that Pieter II often produced copies of his father's famous compositions on commission (this seems to have been the case with Pieter II's *Census at Bethlehem*), and once the enterprise of imitation had been instigated by a patron, many other copies were apparently produced by Pieter II's workshop under his supervision, which were intended for open sale. This organisation yielded a "premier copy" by Pieter II's hand, and various inferior versions that were distributed under the aegis of Pieter II, see Currie and Allart, II, 375, 384ff, 409. The Vienna version of the *Massacre* fooled many eminent critics (including Grossmann) into believing that it was autograph but we might now postulate that this picture is in fact Pieter II's "premier copy".

<sup>55</sup> In 1660 when King Charles II bought the painting, it was no longer recognised as a *Massacre of the Innocents*, and was instead listed as "a Villadge w.<sup>th</sup> souldiery Landskip & c<sup>a</sup> of Olde Brughell, of his best manner", or in other words, a generic scene of village plunder. An earlier 1621 inventory of the Imperial collection at Prague also referred to a picture, likely to be the *Massacre* here under discussion, as 'eine dorfbliederung vom alten Prügl' (a scene of plunder by the Elder Bruegel). Van Mander, however, knew Bruegel's picture as the *Massacre of the Innocents*, noting in the margin alongside his first mention of the picture that 'dit stuck is nu (als ick acht) by den Keyser Rhodolphus' (at present the picture is in the collection of Emperor Rudolph), see Campbell, 14-15. Consequently, since van Mander described the picture as the *Massacre*, the picture had clearly not been altered before 1604, but must have been by 1621.

<sup>56</sup> It has been suggested (for example by Grossmann, 190) that the Vienna picture provides a faithful impression of Bruegel's original, which has since been dramatically altered by overpaints (see above n.55), because it was made in Bruegel's studio and perhaps even worked on by Bruegel himself. Dendrochronology, however, has disproven this thesis, see above n.53. Moreover, recent analysis of Pieter II's methods of imitation by Currie and Allart have shown

original *Massacre* is undated,<sup>57</sup> there is argument to give it to around 1564,<sup>58</sup> some three years prior to Alba's arrival into Brussels.

Much of Sybesma's satirical content, meanwhile, was sourced from the Calvinist Marnix van St. Aldegonde's *De Biënkorf der H. Roomsche Kercke* (The Beehive of the Holy Roman Church), which was published under a pseudonym in 1569.<sup>59</sup> As with Ferber's chronological problem, however, Marnix's tract post-dates the *Beekeepers* by some years, which is dated to c.1566/67.<sup>60</sup> Aware of these anachronisms, both Ferber and Sybesma attempted to resolve them by arguing that the artworks in question should be dated later than convention allows, thus bringing them into line with their interpretations. Neither effort, however, has been convincing.<sup>61</sup>

Sybesma's and Ferber's articles both also highlight more fundamental conceptual problems about the status of art as a social product. Ferber accepted what van Mander had to say and, irrespective of the fact that van Mander singled-out Bruegel's graphic works as being

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that Pieter II rarely copied directly from his father's originals and that he depended largely on cartoons and other preparatory materials that he had inherited. Significantly, these graphic materials appear to have often been partial, giving only the main outlines for a composition. Where this was the case, Pieter II improvised, which accounts for discrepancies often evident between the finer details in Pieter II's copies of Bruegel's originals, including his figure on horseback that differs markedly from the prototype. Therefore, there is no reason to presume that Pieter II's horseback figure records some now-observed erstwhile appearance of Bruegel's original. Currie and Allart's findings about Pieter II's primary dependence on graphic works by Bruegel are interspersed throughout the three volumes, but are most clearly evidenced in their discussion of the Elder Bruegel's production and use in the first instance of cartoons and modelli, see Currie and Allart, I, ch. 2 and Pieter II's reuse of cartoons is indicated by the discovery of dots in the underdrawing of Pieter II's copy of the *Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, revealed in Infrared Reflectograms, which prove that Pieter II transferred his designs to panel by means of pouncing, see II, 344-78. Each of the ten case-studies presented in volume two, however, are also enlightening in this regard. See also Currie and Allart, III, 728-812, and for Pieter II's access to Bruegel's original paintings, see II, 348-65; III, 751-52, 816ff.

<sup>57</sup> The left side of the panel has an unpainted border and original barbe whereas the right does not, indicating that it has been cut down. In this process, the date was lost and Bruegel's signature was truncated.

<sup>58</sup> Marijnissen (1984), 29<sup>105</sup>, 48, identified two versions of the *Massacre*, probably by Pieter II, which are both appended with a signature and date of 1564. The Younger painter's copies cannot have been executed in 1564, since Pieter II was born in c.1564, and so Marijnissen believed that the date appended to these pictures records the original date once featuring on the picture now in Hampton Court.

<sup>59</sup> A. A. van Schelven, *Marnix van Sint Aldegonde*, Utrecht, 1939, 52-65, esp. 53<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> On account of striking stylistic affinities with the *Spring* drawing (Graphische, Albertina, Vienna), which is signed and dated 1565, see Orenstein no. 105, pp. 236-7.

<sup>61</sup> Ferber, 206, for instance discusses the date of the *Massacre*, summing up that convention dates the work to either c.1563/64 or c.1566/67, or put another way, to well before the Duke of Alba's arrival in the Netherlands or to about the same time. The earlier date was proposed by de Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien*, Brussels, 1935, I, 81, while the later was preferred by Grossmann, 199. Ferber also cites R. Bastalaer and G. Hulin de Loo's thesis that the *Massacre* was painted as a pendant image to the *Census at Bethlehem*, which is inscribed with a signature and is dated 1566, in *Pierre Brueghel l'Ancien*, Brussels, 1907, 128-129. Bastalaer and de Loo's idea was repeated by Friedländer (as in n.11), 27-8, and more recently by D. Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier. The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, Leiden and Boston, 2002, 48ff. In offering both, it is clear that Ferber prefers a later date, thus bringing the painting's execution nearer to the arrival of Alba. However, M. Dvorák identified a thematic problem with the pairing of the *Massacre* and the *Census*, see *Die Gemälde Peter Bruegels des Älteren*, Vienna, 1941, 86. Moreover, it is now known that the *Census*'s date has been heavily retouched, making the original date illegible and meaning that 1566 cannot be accepted without reserve. Furthermore, as Campbell argued, the hypothesis that the *Massacre* and *Census* were made as pendants is not likely seeing as their dimensions do not correspond, and when situated among a group of snowy compositions that Bruegel seems to have made during and after the severely harsh winters in the Netherlands between 1564 and '66, it would seem that the *Massacre* is the earliest, followed by the *Hunters in the Snow* ('65), the *Census* ('66) and the *Adoration of the Kings in the Snow* ('67), see Campbell, 19-20; and also P. J. Robinson, 'Ice and snow in paintings of Little Ice Age Winters', *Weather*, LX (Feb., 2005), 37-41. This argument is supported by Marijnissen's suggestion that Bruegel's *Massacre* was originally dated 1564, see above n.58. For Sybesma's ingenious, albeit farfetched, solution to her chronological problem, see below n.69.

political,<sup>62</sup> suggested that Bruegel's paintings likewise functioned as proxies for the narration of social phenomena, implying that they functioned as reportage or propaganda. This, however, simply belies the complexities of Bruegel's imagery, and downplays the subtle relationships existing between art and society, and Bruegel and his audience.<sup>63</sup> Sybesma, for her part, attempted to construct a more nuanced relationship between Bruegel's art and social determinants by considering the audience for Bruegel's *Beekeepers*, but she failed to offer adequate resolution. Van Mander's assertion that Bruegel directed Maaïke to destroy his political drawings presupposes that Bruegel made them for himself. Sybesma initially pursued this idea and suggested that the *Beekeepers* survived Marie's iconoclasm because she incorrectly deemed it safe.<sup>64</sup> However, it is erroneous for art historians to presume that they, working at a remove of some four and a half centuries, are better equipped to ascertain meaning in a work of art that was lost on contemporary audiences, especially one as intimately connected with the artist as his wife. Accordingly, Sybesma offered other possibilities to account for the drawing's survival, such as its having had a Protestant recipient.<sup>65</sup> This, however, is inconsistent with Bruegel's motivations for producing highly finished drawings on the whole, which were intended as designs for engravings.<sup>66</sup> Neither is there any evidence that Bruegel gifted drawings akin to Michelangelo's 'presentation drawings'.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, as Sybesma ultimately conceded,<sup>68</sup> the *Beekeepers* was most likely made to be engraved, which suggests that its 'caustic or derisory' credentials are lacking, for if it really was political then Bruegel is unlikely to have issued it as a fully signed and dated sheet.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See above n.43.

<sup>63</sup> Sybesma, *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> Sybesma, 468.

<sup>65</sup> Sybesma, 469.

<sup>66</sup> On this matter, see Orenstein *et al.*

<sup>67</sup> The term was first coined by J. Wilde, *Michelangelo: Six Lectures*, Oxford, 1978, 147-58. In 1533, Michelangelo gifted three drawings to Tomasso de' Cavalieri; later in the 1530s he made several drawings for Vittoria Colonna; and he also made a series of 'ideal heads' for Gherardo Perini during the 1520s. See H. Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master*, exh. cat, British Museum, London, 2005, 224; A. Nagel, 'Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIX (Dec., 1997), 647-68; C. Whistler, *Michelangelo & Raphael drawings*, Oxford, 2004, 58-59; de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Sculptor, Painter, Architect*, Princeton, 1975, 48; idem, *Michelangelo*, Princeton, 1960, III, 111.

<sup>68</sup> Sybesma, 469.

<sup>69</sup> To attempt to resolve this, Sybesma draws attention to the fact that the right edge of the *Beekeepers* has been cut, in the process truncating the date to MDLXV, which must have originally read MDLXVI, MDLXVII or MDLXVIII. Sybesma suggests that this was done deliberately by Bruegel, or his intended publisher, so that Inquisitors could not identify specific political meaning in the work on account of its date (i.e. following the iconoclasm in 1566). Hence the drawing could be published safely. This however is unlikely, and the drawing's trimmed dimensions could well be innocent alterations made over the course of history in much the same way that many drawings and panel paintings from the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries have been altered. It must be the case that if the drawing was so fraught with heterodox content then Bruegel would have issued it anonymously, just as van St. Aldegonde had done with the very tract from which Sybesma identifies anti-Catholic motifs in Bruegel's *Beekeepers*. There are, furthermore, other versions of the drawing, likely produced in Bruegel's orbit, or made after other versions of the composition by Bruegel himself, which were widely known and were also apparently intended as preparatory designs for engravings, see Renger, 86. E. M. Kavalier offers a more in-depth refutation of Sybesma's hypothesis and a more reasonable alternative reading of the *Beekeepers* in Kavalier, *Pieter Bruegel: parables of order and enterprise*, Cambridge, 1999, ch. 7.

Despite these problems, interpretations along these lines have gained considerable purchase both in and outside of the art historical arena. The *Massacre* was used as the sleeve illustration to Alistair Duke's *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* of 2003,<sup>70</sup> and was also mentioned by Geoffrey Parker in his classic *The Dutch Revolt*.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, art historians have regularly claimed that Bruegel's *Census at Bethlehem* (1566) (fig. 12) alludes to Netherlandish opposition of Spanish taxes, especially the tithe imposed by Alba.<sup>72</sup> The *Census*, however, predates Alba's tithe.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the *Census* was possibly commissioned by Philip II's factor at Antwerp Hieronimo de Curiel,<sup>74</sup> which should inveigh against any such interpretation of the picture—or else we assume that the political content was so obscure that it evaded Hieronimo's attention, in which case we should doubt its effective presence anyway. Likewise, the *Sermon of St. John* (1566) (fig. 13) has regularly attracted speculation along the lines that Bruegel frequented clandestine Calvinist sermons (*hagepreken*) and painted the picture as a Protestant manifesto.<sup>75</sup> However, like the *Massacre*, scores of copies of this composition exist (thirty-three have been identified<sup>76</sup>), which tends to lessen the likelihood that the original was overt, and partisan, propaganda. Moreover, soon after being painted the original (or a second now lost version by Bruegel) was acquired by the Archduchess Isabella, daughter of Philip II, whose orthodoxy cannot be doubted.<sup>77</sup> Jeremy Bangs has argued that Bruegel's *Dulle Griet* (fig. 14) is a topical image about anonymous informers encouraged by the *Bloedraad* to divulge the identities of heretics.<sup>78</sup> In particular, Bangs cited the case of "Long

<sup>70</sup> A. Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries*, London, 2002.

<sup>71</sup> Parker (1977).

<sup>72</sup> Sellink, 230.

<sup>73</sup> Sellink, 230.

<sup>74</sup> Currie and Allart, I, 102<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Marijnissen (1984), 49, no.31.

<sup>76</sup> Twenty four of these have been attributed to Pieter II. The remaining versions are thought to have originated outside Pieter II's workshop, two of which have been attributed to Jan Brueghel, see Ertz, nos E331-F355, 378-9; Currie and Allart, II, 480<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Currie and Allart, I, 143-4. A picture with this subject ('*een predicatie van St. Jan, van den Ouden Brueghel*') is listed in Isabella's inventory, compiled between 1633 and '50, see De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst*, Brussels, 1955, IX, 423. Nothing is known about the date at which this picture entered Isabella's collection, and the dimensions given by the inventory ('*hooch 4 7/11 breed 7 2/11*'; 127.8 x 198cm) are larger than the dimensions of the picture now preserved in the Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest (95.1 x 161.6cm). This discrepancy may, however, be accounted for if the notary included the dimensions of a frame and if we account for the fact that although three edges have original barbes (the left edge is not a true edge), all of the edges have nevertheless lost some wood that was originally an unpainted border. It is just as conceivable, however, that Bruegel painted two versions of the subject. If Bruegel did paint two versions of this composition, then Isabella's version may now be presumed lost. A possible provenance for the picture now extant in Budapest is that it went to Hungary via the Batthyány family, having been commissioned by Boldizsár Batthyány (1543-90). Scholars who prefer to read this image in relation to *hagepreken* prefer this provenance since Boldizsár was a Protestant, see M. Auner, 'Pieter Bruegel. Umrisse eines Lebensbildes', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, LII (1956), 109-18. However, absolutely no documentary evidence supports Auner's hypothesis that the picture was in the collection of the Batthyány by 1569-70, since the earliest definite sighting of the picture was in a 1896 exhibition that took place in Hungary, having been discovered in an old Castle belonging to the Batthyány in Nemetújvár. Furthermore, Boldizsár only converted to Protestantism in 1570, see D. Bobory, *The Sword and the Crucible. Count Boldizsár Batthyány and Natural Philosophy in Sixteenth-Century Hungary*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009.

<sup>78</sup> J. Bangs, 'Pieter Bruegel and History', *The Art Bulletin*, LX (Dec., 1964), 704-05.

Meg", an avaricious bonnet seller who handed over Cristoffel Fabritius and Olivier de Bok to the authorities and whose subsequent executions triggered riots in Antwerp in 1564.<sup>79</sup> Infrared reflectography, however, has revealed that the *Dulle Griet* is dated 1561.<sup>80</sup>

Bruegel's art, therefore, offers little evidence to support the notion that his art, particularly the paintings, had polemical imperatives.

The literary evidence neither stands up to scrutiny. Scholars that have construed Ortelius's 'Bruegel depicted many things that cannot be depicted.... more is always implied than is depicted' to mean covert political-religious iconography have overlooked, as Justus Müller-Hofstede first argued in 1979,<sup>81</sup> the rhetorical style of Ortelius's Latin eulogy.<sup>82</sup> 'Bruegel depicted many things that cannot be depicted...' is in fact taken *ad verbatim* (although to my knowledge this derivation has not been identified hitherto) from Erasmus's eulogy on Albrecht Dürer (1528),<sup>83</sup> which in turn derived from the Elder Pliny's *Naturalis historia* (c.AD 77).<sup>84</sup> Pliny used the phrase to demonstrate the artist Apelles's abilities to imitate Nature's ephemeral phenomena.<sup>85</sup> The following '...more is always implied than is depicted' is again from Pliny, this time his praise of Timanthes's ability to render human emotions.<sup>86</sup> Ortelius's eulogy thus rehearsed standard tropes, culled from Ancient authorities, which constituted the standard vocabulary used by humanists in the sixteenth-century to eulogise artists and in no way relates to hidden political-religious critique in Bruegel's art. Similarly, scholars that have taken van Mander's words literally have overlooked two crucial points: first, that van Mander was writing

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<sup>79</sup> Bangs, 704-5.

<sup>80</sup> The date has been a point of contention, but Currie and Allart reproduce 1561, see I, 94, which was originally published by van Schoute, Verougstraete and C. Garrido, '*La Dulle Griet et le Triomphe de la mort de Pierre Bruegel*. Observations d'ordre technologique', *Le dessin sous-jacent dans la peinture. Colloque X, 5-7 Septembre 1993. Le dessin sous-jacent dans le processus de création*, H. Verougstraete and R. van Schoute (eds.), Louvain-la-Neuve, 1995, 7-12.

<sup>81</sup> J. Müller-Hofstede, 'Zur Interpretation von Pieter Bruegel's Landschaft: ästhetischer Landschaftsbegriff und stoische Weltbetrachtung', O. von Simson and Ma. Winner (eds.), *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, Berlin, 1979, 130-7.

<sup>82</sup> Müller-Hofstede, 103-7; see also J. Muylle, 'Pieter Bruegel en Abraham Ortelius: Bijdrage tot de literaire receptie van Pieter Bruegels werk', *Archivum artis lovaniense: Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de kunst der Nederlanden opgedragen aan Prof. Em. J. K. Steppe*, M. Smeyers (ed.), Louvain, 1981, 319-37.

<sup>83</sup> E. Panofsky, 'Erasmus and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes of Art*, XXXII (1969), 200-227. The eulogy reads:

Durer's name has been known to me among the most renowned masters of painting; some call him the 'Apelles of our age'.—I hold that Apelles, were he alive today, would, as the honest and candid man that he was, concede the glory of this palm to our Albert.—How can this be believed?—I admit that Apelles was the prince of this art upon whom no reproach could be cast except that he did not know when to take his hand off the panel... But Apelles was assisted by colours even though they were fewer and less ambitious [than in the C16th], still by colours. Durer, however, though admirable also in other respects, what does he not express in monochromes (*monochromata*), that is, by black lines? Shade, light, radiance, projections (*eminentias*), depressions. Moreover, from one object [he derives] more than the one aspect which offers itself to the beholder's eye. He accurately observes proportions and harmonies. *He even depicts what cannot be depicted*: fire; rays of light; thunderstorms; sheet lightning; thunderbolts; or even, as the phrase goes, the clouds upon a wall; characters and emotions—in fine, the whole mind of man as it shines forth from the appearance of the body, and almost the very voice. [Emphasis mine]

This translation was taken from idem, "Nebulae in Pariete" Notes on Erasmus' Eulogy on Dürer', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, XIV (1951), 40-41.

<sup>84</sup> Meadow, 108-19.

<sup>85</sup> Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*, California, 2006, 2.

<sup>86</sup> Gibson (2006), 2.

some thirty years after Bruegel's death and clearly depended on hearsay;<sup>87</sup> and second, that van Mander had his own rhetorical agenda for *Het Schilder-boeck*, to make the lives of Netherlandish artists distinctive and interesting even at the expense of truthfulness.<sup>88</sup>

## APPROACHES AND AIMS

In light of the foregoing, this thesis advances with the belief that Bruegel's art rarely, if ever, contains seditious topical references or was conceived or understood as propaganda.<sup>89</sup> No evidence in the paintings survives to the contrary and Martin-Royalton Kisch drew similar conclusions about Bruegel's graphic works.<sup>90</sup> The rhetorical topoi used by Ortelius in fact demonstrate the complexities of Bruegel's imagery as it was perceived by its contemporary audience. In this thesis I hope to demonstrate this argument by considering two paintings by Bruegel that are examined as case-studies concerning the ways in which Bruegel's paintings actually functioned in the original contexts for their display. These are the *Carrying of the Cross*

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<sup>87</sup> Van Mander appears to have been writing at around 1596, see Miedema, *Karel van Mander, Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, Utrecht, 1973, 311-14; M. Leesberg, 'Karel van Mander the painter', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXII (1993-94), 27<sup>127</sup>. Van Mander's chronological remove from Bruegel is compounded by a geographical one. In 1569, when Bruegel died and purportedly ordered the destruction of his drawings, van Mander was in Kortrijk undergoing his second apprenticeship to Pieter Vlerick. After his apprenticeship to Vlerick, he returned to his hometown of Meulebeke, moving from there to Bruges in 1582, to escape the plague, and from there to Haarlem in 1583 where he published the *Schilder-boeck* in 1604, before finally moving to Amsterdam where he died two years later in 1606, see Leesberg, 14-18; N. Turner, L. Hendrix and C. Plazzotta, *The J. Paul Getty Museum European Drawings - 3. Catalogue of the Collections*, Los Angeles, 1997, 218. This demonstrates that van Mander had no legitimate claim to having heard Bruegel's dying wish at first hand.

Many of van Mander's extra-factual ideas about Bruegel that are presented in the 'Life' probably came from Gillis II van Coninxloo (1544-1607). Gillis's mother was Adriana van Dornicke, the sister of Anna van Dornicke (†1529) who was the first wife and widow of van Aelst, who later taught Bruegel to paint (see above n.12). Van Aelst remarried Maaike Verhulst between 1538-40, see Miedema (1994), III, 78-9. Bruegel's teacher, therefore, was also Gillis's uncle and Gillis became directly related to the Bruegel family when Bruegel married van Aelst's daughter, Gillis's cousin, Marie in 1563. Gillis clearly acted on these family connections and moved intimately in the Brueg(h)el family, as an entry in the accounts of the Guild of St. Luke for 1585 reads '*Gielis van Coninxloo, schilder*' (Gillis van Coninxloo, painter) followed by '*Peeter, syn cosyn ende cnecht*' (Pieter, his cousin and apprentice), which is probably a reference to Pieter II, see Rombouts and van Lerius, 292. Nevertheless, even if much of van Mander's biography of Bruegel did come from Gillis, this still does not make the 'Life', including the 'caustic or derisory' comment, vouchsafe because Gillis was away in France for the majority of the 1560s and probably never knew Bruegel personally. Consequently, Gillis is likely to have merely relayed to family gossip and hearsay to van Mander.

<sup>88</sup> Marijnissen (1984), 13. The literature on this matter is vast. Early scholars were quite aware that van Mander was not entirely reliable, see Friedländer (as in n.11), 13-14, 34-35; idem, *Von Jan van Eyck bis Bruegel*, Berlin, 1916, Grossmann (ed.) and M. Kay (trans.), New York, 1981, 136. Following a polemic between Miedema and S. Alpers during the 1970s, however, art historians have grown increasingly wont to doubt the literal veracity of some of van Mander's claims. Miedema and Alper's debated van Mander's assertion that the a priori purpose of peasant art—including Bruegel's—was to arouse laughter, see Miedema, 'Realism and comic mode: the peasant', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, IX (1977), 205-19, which was conceived as a response and refutation of Alpers's arguments that she laid forward in 'Realism as a comic mode: low-life painting seen through Bredero's eyes', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VIII (1975-76), 115-44. Since then, several scholars have attempted to grasp the truer meanings elicited by Bruegel's art without recourse to van Mander biases. On this matter, see Miedema's commentary to van Mander's 'Life of Bruegel', Miedema (1994), III, 252ff; idem, 'Karel van Mander: Did he write art literature', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXII (1993-94), 58-64; and also Melion, 'Karel van Mander (1548-1606)', in C. Murray (ed.), *Key Writers on Art: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century*, London and New York, 2003, 78; idem, *Shaping the Netherlandish canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-boeck*, London and Chicago, 1991, passim, esp.129ff.

<sup>89</sup> D. Freedberg has also promoted this view, see, *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, exh. cat., Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo, January 7 – February 26 1989, Tokyo, 1989, 55.

<sup>90</sup> Kisch, 35.

(1564) and the *Blind Leading the Blind* (1568) (figs. 15, 16). These paintings have been selected from Bruegel's large oeuvre because they both treat biblical subjects and can both be understood, I argue, according to contemporary discourse about seeing and spiritual blindness, which can tell us a great deal about the epistemological uses of Bruegel's art and its didactic significances. It is my contention that these, and by implication Bruegel's other paintings, originally functioned to stimulate learned discussions about Christian morality, in which matters pertaining to dogma or allegiances were deemed largely unimportant.

I am not suggesting in this thesis that Bruegel's art should be studied in isolation from the social conditions affecting its production. Indeed, the innovative qualities of Bruegel's imagery must be indexically related to the turbulent contexts in which it was conceived. I do, however, believe that Bruegel's art failed to intervene on contemporary events in overt or polemical ways, and I will argue that Bruegel's art was in fact symptom and agent of an emerging ideology among a circle of cultured individuals—middle-class merchants and intellectuals such as Ortelius—who Bruegel recognised as his peers and for whom he painted.<sup>91</sup> This emerging set of beliefs was defined by pacifism, adherents to which avowed the primacy of moral spiritual self-fashioning over the swearing of allegiances and emulated the moral Christian philosophy of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536).<sup>92</sup> Indeed, recent reformation scholarship has mandated a revision of the simplistic Catholic versus Protestant binary and its conventional parenthesis between Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517) and Margaret of Parma's pseudo-acknowledgement of Protestantism on the eve of the Eighty Years' War. Rather, reformation historians now consider sixteenth-century reform as being 'pluralist' and 'chronologically fluid', positing the genesis of the various reform movements that flourished in the 1500s to before Luther and charting their evolution throughout the 1400s.<sup>93</sup> As such, the rudimentary binaries that have been so integral to Bruegel scholarship (Catholic versus Protestant, pro- or anti-Habsburg), are simply inadequate; in reality the situation was infinitely more complex, as is, therefore, the context for understanding Bruegel's paintings.

My focus in this thesis is on audience and reception. The potential of reception-focused analyses for understanding the visual arts began to materialise in the late 1980s, influenced greatly by Wolfgang Iser's theory of literary reception. Iser argued that reading a text is a phenomenological process, whereby the text provides patterns or schemes (plots, themes etc.),

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<sup>91</sup> M. Sullivan, 'Bruegel's Proverbs: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII (Sep., 1991), 431-66; idem, *Bruegel's Peasants. Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance*, Cambridge, 1994, 5-13.

<sup>92</sup> J. Ijsewijn, 'The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries', H. Oberman and T. Brady Jr. (eds.), *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations*, New York, 1975, XXVIII, 193-301; B. Mansfield, *Phoenix of His Age: Interpretations of Erasmus c.1550-1750*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1979, 118; M. Hoffmann, 'Faith and Piety in Erasmus's Thought', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XX (Summer, 1989), 241-58.

<sup>93</sup> D. Bagchi and D. Steinmetz, 'Introduction: the scope of Reformation theology', in Bagchi and Steinmetz (ed.), *Reformation Theology*, Cambridge, 2004, 2-3; C. Ocker, 'The German Reformation and Medieval Thought and Culture', *History Compass*, X (2012), 13-46; G. H. Tavad, 'The Catholic reform in the sixteenth-century', *Church History*, XXVI (1957), 275-88.

which establish certain expectations and presuppose an ‘implied reader’, who has certain capabilities for understanding, and bringing meanings to, a text.<sup>94</sup> For Iser, reading is therefore a dialectical process in which meaning is constituted by the reader’s active interaction with the text: the reader will respond to the author’s strategies and fill the ‘blanks’ (*leerstellen*) to weave a meaningful narrative.<sup>95</sup> The literary theorist Gérard Genette similarly argued in 1979 that reading is never passive and that texts, authors and their readers coalesce in an intermediary zone where the reader mediates between what is prescribed by the words themselves and the culturally and socially determined conditions imposed onto them from outside.<sup>96</sup> Genette called this encounter, the play between texts and their readers, ‘paratext’, which is analogous to the relationship described between texts and Iser’s ‘implied reader’. Wolfgang Kemp was one of the first writers to explore the similar relationships existing between artworks and their viewers, arguing that pictures, like texts, depend on the active participation of capable viewers, the ‘implied viewer’ to Iser’s ‘implied reader’, to become meaningful.<sup>97</sup>

This view, that artworks have the fullest meaningful potential when they are interpreted by capable viewers, informs my interpretation of Bruegel’s paintings here under discussion. This is not, however, to downplay the matter of Bruegel’s intentions. Bruegel lived and worked for the most part in Antwerp,<sup>98</sup> which was, at this time, an intellectual ferment nurtured by a thriving print culture. Bruegel lived and worked at the very heart of this intellectual nexus, which provided a thriving arena for the understanding of art in which an infinitely greater amount of material was available to artists and their audiences than had hitherto existed and affected how art was conceived and understood. I will suggest throughout this thesis that Bruegel particularly exploited this changing world, by self-consciously tailoring his art to suit the salient viewing habits of his audience and producing art that was, as it were, remarkably bespoke. It seems peculiarly true in the case of Bruegel that a wealth of available material inspired his art (i.e. paratextual material), and that his art was then interpreted by well-informed viewers (i.e. ‘implied viewers’) who were predisposed to a certain mode of looking and would respond to Bruegel’s visual strategies by likewise invoking a wealth of comparative material to offer multivalent interpretations of his imagery to elicit meanings from his art.

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<sup>94</sup> W. Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Baltimore and London, 1974; idem, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore and London, 1978. For some general remarks, see J. P. Riquelme, ‘Introduction: Wolfgang Iser’s Aesthetic Politics: Reading as Fieldwork’, *New Literary History*, XXXI (Winter, 2000), 7-12.

<sup>95</sup> Iser (1978), 302.

<sup>96</sup> G. Genette *Introduction à l’architect*, Paris, 1979.

<sup>97</sup> W. Kemp (ed.), *Der Betrachter ist im Bild: Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik*, Cologne, 1985; idem, ‘Kunstwerk und Betrachter: Der rezeptionsästhetische Ansatz’, *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, H. Belting et al. (ed.), Berlin, 1986, 203-22.

<sup>98</sup> He appears to have moved to Brussels at some point following his marriage to Maaike in 1563, because he was buried in Brussels, see above n.20 and n.23. However, there is no evidence to assume that move was immediate.



My understanding of meaning in art therefore differs from Erwin Panofsky's concept of 'intrinsic meaning' as the objective of iconological analysis.<sup>99</sup> Panofsky's method prioritised "what" a picture definitively "meant",<sup>100</sup> privileging in the process the artist's sovereign capacity as the creator of meaning. Reception theories differ by asking "how" artworks engendered meanings, and resolve this question by paying close attention to *both* the conceptual skills of the artist and the perceptual skills of the audience. Consequently, the interpretations I offer in this thesis of the selected paintings are not presumed definitive: they are not solutions to Bruegel's imagery. Rather, they are ruminations, time- and place-specific, in which I attempt to recover some of the social, cultural and spiritual significances embodied in and elicited by these paintings during the subjective act of interpretation. This view is consistent with current developments in Netherlandish scholarship, and particularly influential is Jeanne Nuechterlein, whose work focuses on how and in what contexts early Netherlandish art was originally viewed and understood.<sup>101</sup>

Chapter 1 of this thesis considers the intended audience for Bruegel's paintings and the contexts in which they were seen. I will argue that in their original settings, Bruegel's paintings functioned as discussion pieces<sup>102</sup> and were set-up as stimulants to conversations about moral Christian themes, during which cultured individuals would have taken recourse to a wealth of 'paratextual material' to enable their understanding of Bruegel's deliberately complex imagery. Chapters 2 and 3 are then given over to demonstrating this argument, in each of which I will offer an interpretation of Bruegel's *Carrying* and the *Blind* and recover some of the material that

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<sup>99</sup> Panofsky's iconological method had a gradual evolution but was most cogently and definitively expressed in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Harmondsworth, 1955, in which Panofsky outlined his three-stage method of iconographical to iconological analysis of the visual arts. Panofsky's method, its conceptual foundations (e.g. theories put forward by Heinrich Wölfflin, Aloïs Riegl, Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer and Robert Vischer), and its merits and shortcomings has since been the subject of many essays and articles, but a fair summary is provided by J. Białostocki, 'Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968): Thinker, Historian, Human Being', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, IV (1970), 68-89.

<sup>100</sup> This is made abundantly clear in Panofsky's interpretation of Riegl's *kunstwollen*. Riegl's *kunstwollen* seems to have referred to the artist's innate drive or will to art, 'a specific and consciously purposeful *kunstwollen* that prevails in battle against function, raw material and technique'. And although the term's meaning has been the subject of much debate, what Riegl seems to have meant is that an artist experienced an innate will to create art as a projection of his or her experiences of the world, see A. Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, B. Binstock (ed.) and J. E. Jung (trans.), New York, 2004, 13; H. Zerner, 'Aloïs Riegl: Art, Value and Historicism', *Dædalus*, CV (Winter, 1976), passim, esp 179ff. In Panofsky's hands, however, the concept of *kunstwollen* was somewhat inverted, going from the how or why art is to be considered meaningful to ascertaining *what* that meaning is. Panofsky thus interpreted *kunstwollen* as the immanent meaning of a work of art, 'what resides in artistic phenomena as [its] essential meaning', about which Panofsky tendered the term *Sinn* in substitution for *kunstwollen*, loosely meaning the 'essence of things', see Binstock and Jung, 19-20; Zerner, 180; Białostocki (1970), 72-3.

<sup>101</sup> Nuechterlein's interests first became known to me in a paper delivered in anticipation of her forthcoming book during 'Artistic Interplay: a Workshop on 'Jan Gossaert's Renaissance', 21 March 2011, National Gallery, London. Nuechterlein's book, provisionally titled *Fictionalized Histories of Early Netherlandish Art*, is forthcoming but no date of publication is yet known. Nuechterlein is, however, due to publish an article related to *Fictionalized Histories*, titled 'Writing absent histories: the Coudenberg sculpture of a saint', which has been submitted to the *Journal of the Historians of Netherlandish Art* and is likely to appear late 2012 or early 2013. I have also consulted Nuechterlein, 'Location and the experience of early Netherlandish art', *Journal of Art Historiography*, VII (Dec., 2012), 1-23.

<sup>102</sup> As Sullivan has suggested, see Sullivan (1994), 33-8; Sullivan, 'Bruegel's "Misanthrope": Renaissance Art for a Humanist Audience', *Artibus et Historiae*, XIII (1992), 143-62.

likely affected both Bruegel's conception of these pictures and their subsequent reception. This material, much of which is often exactly contemporary to the picture's date of execution, ranges from printed devotional literature, including that of Erasmus, emblems, proverbs and other art. Additionally, similarities between the two pictures and contemporary drama put on by the *rederijker kamers* will recur frequently.<sup>103</sup> Ultimately, this approach will yield more plausible, historically situated, insights into the original function and significances of Bruegel's pictures, the complex nature of which wholly belies previous misinterpretations of them as having been propagandist or polemical, or of Bruegel as having been a religious radical.

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<sup>103</sup> Walter Gibson has emphasised that the links between Bruegel and the *rederijkers* was especially close, since the Violieren (Antwerp's preeminent *rederijker kamer*) had merged with Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke in 1480, see Gibson, 'Artists and Rederijkers in the Age of Bruegel', *The Art Bulletin*, LXIII (Sep., 1981), 426-46.

# Chapter 1:

## RECONSTRUCTING THE INTENDED AUDIENCE FOR BRUEGEL'S PAINTINGS AND THE CONTEXTS OF THEIR DISPLAY

Very often we cannot fully understand the character of a work, as the artist conceived and executed it and as the spectator of the day saw it, without going back to the way in which it was originally displayed.<sup>104</sup>

Understanding where art was originally displayed, and who saw it in those locations, can tell us a great deal about how those artworks were conceived and understood. It is these issues of audience, context and display that form the focus of this Chapter. Since Gustav Glück's seminal study of 1910,<sup>105</sup> which virtually dispelled van Mander's erroneous 'peasant Bruegel' sobriquet, much emphasis is given to the fact that Bruegel moved among a circle of professional, cultured individuals comprising humanists and merchants in Antwerp and Brussels.<sup>106</sup> Arthur Popham's subsequent publication in 1931 of Ortelius's eulogy to Bruegel, which ends 'Ortelius dedicated this with grief to the memory of his friend', unequivocally affirmed the newly envisioned Bruegel the *mediocriter literati*.<sup>107</sup> Since then, Bruegel's art has since been deemed cognisant with the concerns and beliefs of his sophisticated friends and collectors. In this Chapter, I will demonstrate that Bruegel's paintings were indeed collected exclusively by cultured collectors, whose homes they decorated, by considering evidence found in old inventories. This will enable some hypotheses about where Bruegel's *Carrying* and the *Blind* originally hanged. Then, I will be considering the ways in which Bruegel's paintings would have functioned (in the epistemological sense of the term) in such locations. I will ultimately argue that Bruegel's paintings were used as discussion pieces,<sup>108</sup> seen and discussed in the home in the company of friends. I will also suggest that Bruegel self-consciously conceived his art with such locations and functions in mind. In the shorter preliminary section of the Chapter, however, I will be considering the beliefs prevalent in Bruegel's milieu to demonstrate that there is no credence to support the view that Bruegel, his friends, or his patrons had radical views. In sum this Chapter provides a framework to situate my interpretation of the *Carrying* and the *Blind*, historically evoking the kinds of ways Bruegel's paintings were originally viewed, by whom and to what ends.

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<sup>104</sup> As M. Roskill wrote about Raphael's tapestries for the Sistine Chapel, see 'Reconstructing how works were displayed: Raphael's tapestries in the Sistine Chapel', *What is Art History*, New York, 1976, 105.

<sup>105</sup> G. Glück, *Peter Bruegels des Aelteren Gemälde im Kunsthistorischen Hofsmuseum zu Wien*, Brussels, 1910.

<sup>106</sup> As Orenstein noted, 8; Sullivan (1994), 5-13.

<sup>107</sup> Popham, 187-8.

<sup>108</sup> See above n.102.

## I THE VIEWS OF BRUEGEL'S ASSOCIATES

There is now a consensus among scholars that Bruegel belonged to a cultured circle comprising humanists, merchants and publishers, who gathered in Antwerp in the orbits of Hieronymus Cock, the publisher; Abraham Ortelius, the humanist and cartographer; and Christopher Plantin, the preeminent print publisher during the second half of the 1500s.<sup>109</sup> Among this wide and far-reaching network were playwrights, doctors, scholars, bankers, theologians, artists and musicians.<sup>110</sup> What is conspicuous about this group is that they all remained in Antwerp during the Counter-Reformation, when many of their colleagues were fleeing to the Protestant north for fear of religious persecution.<sup>111</sup> Bruegel even relocated to Brussels during the 1560s,<sup>112</sup> and although it has often been supposed that this move was motivated by Bruegel's fear of persecution at Antwerp, this is erroneous as moving to Brussels actually brought Bruegel closer to the seat of Catholic Government in the Netherlands. These circumstances suggest that Bruegel and his friends remained, by and large, loyal to the status quo and managed to stay out of trouble with the Catholic authorities. This is not to suggest that Bruegel's associates were staunch Catholics who abhorred Protestantism. Rather, as I will demonstrate here, members of Bruegel's milieu seldom waded into religious and political polemics and generally supported the Counter-Reformation's endeavours to restore faith, which they strove to achieve on a personal level by emulating the moral Christianity of Erasmus.

Erasmus was popular throughout the decades following his death (†1536) and his works continued to be published and circulated, much of which originated at Antwerp. And although Erasmus's reputation was smeared in 1557 by Pope Paul IV, who added Erasmus's works to the Inquisition's list of prohibited literature,<sup>113</sup> he was quickly vindicated by Pope Pius IV, who removed Erasmus and several other 'pious and learned' people from the list in 1563.<sup>114</sup> This galvanised Erasmus's popularity once more, especially among the *mediocriter literati* to which Bruegel belonged, who turned to Erasmus's literature as exemplars of tolerance and Christian morality as a response to the ever-intensifying sense of religious crises in the 1560s.

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<sup>109</sup> Several scholars have stated that Bruegel would have lamented being called a humanist or a painter for humanists, see for example J. de Coo, *Fritz Mayer van den Bergh: The Collector, the Collection*, Schoten, 1979, 267. These objections, however, are unsubstantiated, and the circumstances of Bruegel's life and his art confirm his humanistic aspirations, see Sullivan (1994), 5-13.

<sup>110</sup> These are the kinds of professionals that are listed in and/or contributed to Ortelius's *Album Amicorum*, which figured among them Bruegel, see above n.6.

<sup>111</sup> Orenstein, 35. Marcus van Vaernewyck, for example, reported in the spring of 1567 that many of the wealthiest and most important people were leaving the southern Netherlands in great haste and heading for the safer north, see van Vaernewyck, *Memoires of Marcus van Vaernewyck sur les troubles religieux dans les Pays-Bas*, H. van Duyse (trans.), Ghent, 1905, I, 425.

<sup>112</sup> See above n.98.

<sup>113</sup> L. von Pastor, *The history of the popes from the close of the middle ages: drawn from the secret archives of the Vatican and other original sources*, F. Ignatius Antrobus (ed.), London, 1898, XIV, 277, 279.

<sup>114</sup> Von Pastor, XVI, 21, 24. It was on the recommendation of Archbishop Anton Brus that Erasmus and several other writers were removed from Paul IV's list, who reported to Pius IV that several 'pious and learned persons' had been added to the list in error.

Erasmus had shunned polemics<sup>115</sup> proclaiming that ‘I am all for moderation, and the reason why I have a bad name with both sides is that I exhort both sides to adopt a more peaceable policy.’<sup>116</sup> For Erasmus, the exterior matters of faith were irrelevant and he instead championed Christian morality as a truer form of faith, derived from the examples provided in scripture.<sup>117</sup>

That similarly ‘peaceable’ views with an emphasis on Christian morality were exercised by Bruegel’s associates is suggested by the fact that among Bruegel’s circle can be counted individuals with antithetical religious and political views. For example, Ortelius and Plantin both knew Benito Arias Montanus (1527-98), the Catholic theologian who advised at the Council of Trent (1545-63).<sup>118</sup> Montanus in fact saw Bruegel’s *Death of the Virgin* (fig. 4) in Ortelius’s home at some point between 1568 and ‘75, and later praised the picture’s ‘greatest piety’.<sup>119</sup> Simultaneously, however, Ortelius was friends with the Calvinist Pieter Heyns (1537<sup>120</sup>-1598).<sup>121</sup> Ortelius, Plantin and Cock, meanwhile, all corresponded and worked with Dirck Volckertzoon Coornhert (1522-90), the engraver and playwright whose criticisms of the Catholic church led to his imprisonment in The Hague in 1568.<sup>122</sup> This heterogeneous mixture suggests that Ortelius and his friends did indeed exercise moderate views and generally avoided polemics and religious partisanship.<sup>123</sup> Since heresy was punishable by death, the outward

<sup>115</sup> Save for the incident in 1524 when he was coerced into a public dispute with Luther over Free Will, see E. Rummel, *Understanding Christian Thinkers: Erasmus*, London and New York, 2004, 95.

<sup>116</sup> Rummel, 16.

<sup>117</sup> Rummel, *passim*; Hoffmann, *passim*; J. B. Payne, ‘Erasmus: Interpreter of Romans’, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, II (Jan., 1971), 1-35; M. O’rourke Boyle, ‘Evangelism and Erasmus’, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, III (1999), 44-52.

<sup>118</sup> Popham, 184, 187; Orenstein *et al.*, 258-60; B. Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano: 1527-1598*, London and Leiden, 1972.

<sup>119</sup> Montanus wrote this in a letter to Ortelius in 1590, see Ortelius, *Abrahami Ortelii (geographi Antverpiensis) et vivorum eruditorum ad eundem et ad Jacobum Colium Ortelianum (Abrahami Ortelii sororis filium) epistulae. Cum aliquot aliis epistolis et tractatibus quibusdam ab utroque collectis (1524 - 1628) ex autographis mandante Ecclesia Londino-Batava edidit*, J. H. Hessels (comp. and ed.), Cambridge, 1887, 428-9. The relevant part of the letter reads:

...I remember seeing at your house a picture of the departure of the virgin mother from this mortal life painted both with great skill and with great piety: this picture you gave to our common friend Philip Galle to engrave on copper; an impression of it which I much wished to have, I think I have already asked you for in the name of friendship and piety, unless possibly that letter of mine, as frequently in the case of others, was not delivered to you.

Quoted in English from Popham, 184. In Antwerp, Montanus collaborated with Christopher Plantin on the *Polygot Bible* between 1568 and ‘72, see M. Saebo (ed.), *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation II From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Göttingen, 2008, 115ff. Montanus remained in Antwerp until 1575, working on numerous meditative texts, again in collaboration with Plantin, see M. Wayne Cole and M. Pardo (eds.), *Inventions of the studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, University of North Carolina, 2005, ch. 3.

<sup>120</sup> H. Meeus, ‘Peeter Heyns, a ‘French Schoolmaster’’, J. de Clercq, N. Lioce and P. Swiggers (eds.), *Orbis Supplementa. Grammaire et enseignement du français, 1500-1700*, Leuven, 2000, 301-08.

<sup>121</sup> R. Boumans, ‘The Religious Views of Abraham Ortelius’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVII (1954), 376.

<sup>122</sup> Coornhert played a key role in the noble’s rebellion of 1566, which fuelled the Calvinist campaign that resulted in the outbreak of the iconoclastic riots of 1567. It was on account of these associations and his biting critique of the establishment that forced Coornhert to seek refuge in Germany. He was nevertheless arrested in 1567 and imprisoned, see H. Bonger, *The Life and Works of Dirck Volkertszoon Coornhert*, Gerrit Voogt (ed. and trans.), Amsterdam and New York, 313; G. Voogt, *Constraint on Trial. Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Religious Freedom*, Missouri, 2000, ch. 2.

<sup>123</sup> This is the consensual opinion. Sullivan, for example, wrote that ‘the circle of men associated with Bruegel are humanists, specifically “humanist Christians” if we are to use the phrase to describe anyone familiar with Latin literature and interested in reviving ancient arts and letters to advance Christian morality’, see Sullivan (1994), 8-9.

orthodoxy of those affiliated with Bruegel is unsurprising. The banker Nicolaas Jongelinck (Bruegel's keenest patron, see below) was certainly Catholic.<sup>124</sup> Jongelinck's brother, the sculptor Jacques (who may have travelled with Bruegel to Italy<sup>125</sup>), even produced a life-size statue of Alba in 1569 and was a favourite of Granvelle's.<sup>126</sup> Ortelius was never found to exercise heterodox views,<sup>127</sup> despite coming from a Protestant family.<sup>128</sup> Cock, meanwhile, obtained his publishing permit from the Habsburg government in 1550,<sup>129</sup> for which demonstrable orthodoxy was a prerequisite. And Plantin enjoyed the patronage of King Phillip for the *Polygot Bible* (1571-72), which was overseen and edited by Montanus.<sup>130</sup>

Direct evidence, however, that those in Bruegel's circle generally avoided polemics and failed to vehemently tow particular allegiances is found in Ortelius's letters. In one, written in 1567 to his nephew Emmanuel van Meteren, Ortelius wrote:

We live in a very disordered time, which we have little hope of seeing very soon improved... the patient will soon be entirely prostrate, being threatened with so many and vicious illnesses, as the Catholic evil, the gueuz fever, and the Huguenot dynasty [Protestants], mixed with other vexations... All this we have deserved through our sins; for we are motivated by pride and ambition; everyone wishes to teach others, but not to be humble himself; to know much and to do little, to dominate others, but not to bow under God's hand. May He be merciful to us, and grant us to see our faults.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>124</sup> He held several official offices under the employ of Philip II. At some time before March 1551 Jongelinck was appointed collector of the Toll of Zealand - a ducal toll levied on goods brought into the Netherlands. In 1559 he was collector of the Great Land toll of Brabant, which was levied on goods which passed into or through the Brabant overland. His third major office, to which he was appointed on 12th October 1564, was collector of the Wine Excise, applied to each barrel of wine that entered the Brabant, Flanders and Zealand from overseas, the profits from which were divided equally between Jongelinck and Philip II. See, I. Buchanan, 'The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: I. 'Bacchus and the Planets' by Jacques Jongelinck', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXII (Feb., 1990), 103; C. van der Velde, 'The Labours of Hercules, a lost series of paintings by Frans Floris', *The Burlington Magazine*, LVII (Mar., 1965), 114; Grossmann, 15, 26-7.

<sup>125</sup> Grossmann, 14; Büttner, 212 suggested that Jacques and Marten de Vos were travel companions. That Bruegel travelled with de Vos is suggested by two letters written by Scipio Fabius in Bologna to Ortelius in 1561 and '65, in which he enquired about the well-being of de Vos and Bruegel together, implying that the physician had met the two of them together when they were both travelling northwards through Italy, see Popham, 188<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> J. Becker, 'Hochmut kommt vor dem Fall. Zum Standbild Albas in der Zitadelle von Antwerpen 1571-1574 (Pride Goes before a Fall; Remarks on Alba's Statue in the Citadel of Antwerp)', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, V (1971), 75-115; L. Forrer, 'Jacques Jonghelinck', *Biographical Dictionary of Medallists*, New York, 1970, III, 82-5.

<sup>127</sup> In 1588 the Habsburg Privy council wrote to the clerk of Antwerp, Henry de Moy, enquiring as to whether Ortelius was registered a Lutheran and whether he had, in accordance with contemporary custom for dealing with heresy, been disarmed. The answer to the first question was in the negative, but the clerk did report that Ortelius had been disarmed. Interestingly, however, this was put down to error and Ortelius's orthodoxy was later confirmed to the council. The documentation has been preserved in the Antwerp archives, and it was discovered in 1954 that preceding Ortelius's name is a '+', a conventional symbol used to denote Roman Catholic religion. See René Boumans, 375-76, 376<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>128</sup> In 1535 both Ortelius's father Leonard and his uncle, Jacob, were both arrested for owning heretical books. Jacob was particularly fervent in his Protestant beliefs, and he educated Ortelius following Leonard's death in 1539. See H. Wauwermans, 'Abraham Ortelius', *Biographic nationale*, Brussels, XVI (1901), col. 293.

<sup>129</sup> Orenstein, 'Bruegel's Engagement with Printmaking', in Orenstein *et al.*, 50.

<sup>130</sup> Plantin's sponsorship from the Habsburg monarch is perhaps surprising because Plantin had published material criticising the Catholic church following the *Beeldenstorm*. Such vacillating attitudes, however, virtually prove a general and pragmatic lack of interest in dogmatically towing religious and political allegiances among Ortelius's circle at Antwerp. See, Z. Shalev, 'Sacred Geography, Antiquarianism and Visual Erudition: Benito Arias Montano and the Maps in the Antwerp Polygot Bible', *Imago Mundi*, LV (2003), 56-80; idem., *Sacred Words and Worlds. Geography, Religion and Scholarship, 1550-1700*, Leiden, 2012, 28.

<sup>131</sup> Letter no. 23, in Ortelius (1887). Quoted in English from Grossmann, 'Bruegel's "Woman Taken in Adultery" and other grisailles', *The Burlington Magazine*, XCIV (Aug., 1952), 226.

This letter clearly evinces Ortelius's non-partisanship, in which he apportions equal blame to Catholics, Protestants and political rebels for causing religious and social discord and is similar in tone to Erasmus's exhortation for all sides to adopt 'a more peaceable policy.'<sup>132</sup> In another letter Ortelius wrote '[religion] ties me but without reference to place, time, or persons but rather only to God', and in another that 'security is in silence... in these times, we must remain silent. Christianity is not so much knowing, saying or doing this or that, but being [true and faithful]'.<sup>133</sup> Both of these clearly betray Ortelius's Erasmian views, since Erasmus had similarly declared that he did not service 'any party, I serve Christ, who belongs to us all.'<sup>134</sup>

To counter accusations of idealism, it should be noted that such a prudent response to contemporary crises was probably motivated just as much by attempts to maintain good reputations, as it was motivated by a genuine concern for Christian morality. Antwerp tended to promote religious pragmatism since its mercantile monopoly depended on the influx of merchants from all over Europe. These merchants brought with them various religious beliefs and the city's refusal to enforce imperial edicts against heresy is well known, and was ostensibly motivated by economic considerations.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, Ortelius's letters do give evidence to an ethical imperative underlying his religious views and his reticence to declare allegiance is comparable to the underlying philosophy of Familism.<sup>136</sup> In his 1935 monograph—one of the earliest attempts to ascertain Bruegel's 'secret thought'<sup>137</sup>—Charles de Tolnay proposed that Bruegel was a Familist who belonged to Hendrik Niclaes's (c.1508-c.1580) *Hiisgesinnes der Liefden* (Family of Love sect), founded about 1540.<sup>138</sup> Familists outwardly conformed to whatever denomination their circumstances required but firmly championed private communion with the Divine in pursuit of salvation.<sup>139</sup> Although de Tolnay ventured too far into the realm of speculation by claiming that Bruegel was a Familist proper, Familism certainly was current in Bruegel's circle. Plantin was definitely a member<sup>140</sup> and published several Familist texts including Niclaes's seminal *Den Spiegel der Gerechtighe* (1556), which was issued to promote Familist teaching outside the

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<sup>132</sup> Rummel, 16.

<sup>133</sup> Letters dated January and March 1593 and are here quoted from G. Mangani, 'Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning of the Cordiform Projection', *Imago Mundi*, L (1998), 75.

<sup>134</sup> Rummel, 95.

<sup>135</sup> E. M. Braekman, "Het Lutheranisme in Antwerpen" *Religieuze stromingen te Antwerpen voor en na 1585*, *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*, LXX (1987), 23-37; G. D. Ramsay, *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands: The End of the Antwerp Mart*, Manchester, 1986, II, 37, 66ff; Gibson, *Bruegel*, London, 1977, 18-19.

<sup>136</sup> See J. Dietz Moss, "Goddess with God": Hendrick Niclaes and His Family of Love', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, LXXI (1981), 1-89

<sup>137</sup> De Tolnay (1935), I, 1, 1-19.

<sup>138</sup> See Dietz Moss, 7-20.

<sup>139</sup> Dietz Moss, 7-20.

<sup>140</sup> A. Hamilton, *The Family of Love*, Cambridge, 1987, 65-74; H. de la Fontaine Verwey, "The History of Guicciardini's Description of the Low Countries", *Quaerendo. A Quarterly Journal from the Low Countries Devoted to Manuscripts and Printed Books*, XII (1982), 30.

order.<sup>141</sup> Significantly, Ortelius's library contained a copy of *Den Spieghel*<sup>142</sup> and his sympathy for Familism is confirmed elsewhere.<sup>143</sup> Perhaps, therefore, Ortelius and his friends including Bruegel were all aware of Familism—even if they were not full initiates—and generally supported the sect's prudent approach to faith, which avowed inner spiritual renewal for the restoration of the church.<sup>144</sup>

Also relevant is Neostoicism, which flourished in Bruegel's circle around the scholar Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), who was friends with Ortelius and an employee of Plantin.<sup>145</sup> Neostoicism was a practical philosophy that combined ancient ideas about how to ideally live with Christianity, championing constancy, tolerance and peace.<sup>146</sup> Particularly influential for Stoics, however, and of most interest for this study, was Erasmus's advice that one should separate himself from the 'common herd' and become 'a spectator rather than an actor', so as to learn from the negative example of humanity.<sup>147</sup> Around mid-century, this translated into the Stoic motto to 'endure and forbear', which appeared on an engraving by Coornhert after Martin van Heemskerck and published by Cock showing *Democritus and Heraclitus* (1557) (fig. 17).<sup>148</sup> This image showing Democritus, who laughed uncontrollably at man's folly, and Heraclitus, who responded by crying inconsolably, features a cartouche that addresses the viewer thus: 'and you, do not shed tears like Heraclitus, nor roar with laughter like Democritus: endure and forbear as is proper'.<sup>149</sup> Balancing aloofness and practical experience, this advice typifies the Stoical requirement to see and observe human folly so as to extract moral guidance. This requirement to "see" and learn from humanity's errancy introduces key concepts concerning sight and figurative blindness that are pertinent to my understanding of Bruegel's *Carrying* and *Blind*. The purchase of such ocular metaphors in Bruegel's milieu will become clear in Chapters 2 and 3 and the remainder of this Chapter is deciated to considering who owned Bruegel's paintings and how and where they were originally viewed.

<sup>141</sup> P. Valkema Blouw, 'Was Plantin a Member of the Family of Love? Notes on his dealings with Hendrik Niclaes', *Quaerendo. A Quarterly Journal from the Low Countries Devoted to Manuscripts and Printed Books*, XXIII (1993), 3-22.

<sup>142</sup> Mangani, 75.

<sup>143</sup> In 1567, for example, Ortelius was entrusted with sensitive information about the Family by the Parisian professor Guillaume Postel, who asked the geographer to pass on his regards to Plantin, see Boumans, 374-77.

<sup>144</sup> C. W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630*, Cambridge, 1994, 29; L. Nuti, 'The World Map as an emblem: Abraham Ortelius and the stoic contemplation', *Imago Mundi*, LV (2003), 38-55.

<sup>145</sup> For Plantin and Ortelius, see Sullivan (1994), 9. Lipsius was listed in Ortelius's *Album Amicorum*, see above n.6. On Lipsius and Plantin, see M. A. Nauwelaerts, 'L'Édition de la Correspondence de Juste Lipse', *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Louvaniensis: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, Louvain, 1971, J. Iljsewijn and E. Kessler (eds.), Munich, 1973, 433. See also, J. Papy, 'An Antiquarian Scholar between Text and Image? Justus Lipsius, Humanist Education and the Visualization of Ancient Rome', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, XXXV (2004), 97-131.

<sup>146</sup> J. Stellers, *Stoicism*, Berkeley, 2006; Papy, 97-131; G. Voogt, 'Primacy of Individual Conscience or Primacy of the State? The Clash between Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert and Justus Lipsius', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXVIII (Winter, 1997), 1231-49. G. H. Tavard, 'The Catholic reform in the sixteenth-century', *Church History*, XXVI (1957), 275-88.

<sup>147</sup> C. R. Thompson (trans.), *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, Chicago and London, 1997, 542-3; Rummel, 90.

<sup>148</sup> Sullivan, (1992), 155.

<sup>149</sup> C. Levesque, 'Truth in Paintings – Comedic Resolution in Bruegel's *Landscape with the Magpie on the Gallows*', David R. Smith (ed.), *Parody and Festivity in Early Modern Art. Essays on Comedy and Social Vision*, Ashgate, 2012, 72.



## II

### BRUEGEL'S PAINTINGS: PATRONS AND PLACES

As far as we know, Bruegel painted solely for individual patrons. Certainly, he shunned Church and civic commissions.<sup>150</sup> Evidence gleaned from technical examination of Bruegel's paintings, moreover, strongly suggests that he did not run an active atelier and painted largely independently, without workshop assistance.<sup>151</sup> This makes it unlikely that Bruegel produced paintings *en masse* for the open market, which is confirmed by records from Antwerp's *Onser Lieve Vrouwen Pand*.<sup>152</sup> By 1500 Antwerp's *Pand* was Europe's premier marketplace for art, but its accounts suggest that artists of high stature never rented stalls: Jan van Hemessen (fl. 1519-69), Pieter Aertsen (1507/08-75), Frans Floris (1519/20-1570) and Bruegel himself, are all conspicuous only by their absence from the *Pand*.<sup>153</sup> Notwithstanding the occasional appearance of major artworks including altarpieces,<sup>154</sup> it does seem that the *Pand*'s primary purpose was to provide a platform for mediocre painters for whom the imitation of famous artists' styles was their stock-in-trade.<sup>155</sup> Bruegel certainly does not belong with this category,

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<sup>150</sup> The incident in Mechelen is the only known exception, but Bruegel's involvement with this altarpiece was at second-hand, having been subcontracted to him by Dorizi, see above n.13. Moreover, Bruegel's acceptance of this commission is perhaps explained on account of his juvenile status, since he was not yet enrolled as a master painter and his teacher van Aelst had recently died. The only indication that Bruegel accepted a civic commission, meanwhile, is a story told by van Mander concerning Bruegel's commission from Brussels' magistrates to paint pictures commemorating the completion of the Willebroek canal from Brussels to Antwerp. Important events such as these were often commemorated in art and this project was forestalled, according to van Mander, by Bruegel's death, see Miedema (1994), I, 193. However, there is doubt whether Bruegel actually received this commission as the Willebroek canal was opened in 1565—some four years before Bruegel's purported commission to memorialise the event.

<sup>151</sup> Technical analysis of several of Bruegel's surviving paintings carried out by Currie and Allart has demonstrated that Bruegel was exclusively involved in their production. The underdrawings betray a sure and confident hand, with many amendments and alterations evident during working progress. Likewise, many further amends were often made by Bruegel during the painted stages of execution, which are now often visible in Bruegel's pictures as pentimenti. Both these observations confirm Bruegel's exclusive involvement in the production of his paintings, since such liberties and creative agency was seldom enjoyed by assistants and workshop-hands at this period. This is made abundantly clear in Currie and Allart's four case study analyses of Bruegel's methods, and their concluding reassessment, see Currie and Allart, I, 40, 64, 101-316.

<sup>152</sup> D. Ewing, 'Marketing Art in Antwerp, 1460-1560: Our Lady's Pand', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXII (Dec., 1990), 558-584, esp. 562; L. Campbell, 'The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXVIII, (Apr., 1976), 188-98. The municipal decree dated 1481 establishes that the *Pand* had monopoly over the sale of 'altarpieces, panels, images, tabernacles, and carvings, polychromed or unpolychromed', see J. B. van der Straelen, *Jaerboek der vermaerde en kunstryke Gilde van Sint Lucas binnen de Stad Antwerpen, behelzende de gedenkwaardigste geschiedenissen in dit Genootschap voorgevallen sedert het jaer 1434 tot het jaer 1795*, Antwerp, 1855, 29.

<sup>153</sup> This is despite the fact that the majority of artists, and probably Bruegel himself, all lived in the Vrijdagmarkt area of Antwerp, which was only a short distance from the *Pand* that was then located between what is now the Schoenmarkt and Groenkerkhofstraat, see Ewing, 562; F. W. H. Hollstein, *The new Hollstein Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450 - 1700*. Phillips Galle, Sellink (ed.), Rotterdam, 2001, xxxix-xi.

<sup>154</sup> In October 1524 a certain Gerart van der Scaeft bought an eight-foot-high altarpiece from the *Pand*, see Ewing, 563, 567; L. F. Jacobs, 'The Marketing and Standardization of South Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces: Limits on the Role of Patron', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXI (Jun., 1989), 209.

<sup>155</sup> Hence phenomena such as the "Bosch revival", "Romanism", and "Antwerp Mannerism", see Friedländer (as in n.11), XI. *The Antwerp Mannerists*. Adriaen Ysenbrant; XII. Jan van Scorel and Pieter Coeck van Aelst. The copying of artworks is a phenomenon dateable to the early 1400s. This practice may have been driven by financial considerations, but largely relates to the training of painters. However, the copy and dissemination of famous artworks became prolific with the growth of the open art market, see Ewing 559-62.

and his emancipation from the soporific tendencies of marketable art must be put down to the financial support of wealthy patrons.<sup>156</sup>

Old inventories and documents of other kinds confirm this as being the case and provide a fair amount of information about who owned, and sometimes the locations for, Bruegel's paintings. A 1566 document records that Nicolaas Jongelinck owned 'sixteen pieces by Bruegel, among which a *Tower of Babel*, a *Carrying of the Cross* and *The Twelve Months*' (figs. 15, 18, 19a-e).<sup>157</sup> The *Months* series (1565)—originally comprising six panels of which five are extant<sup>158</sup>—, the *Carrying* and *Babel* (1563) all decorated Jongelinck's villa outside Antwerp city gates at 't Goet ter Beke.<sup>159</sup> Jean Noirot, master of the Antwerp Mint between 1562 and '72, owned five Bruegels, including the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* (c.1567) (fig. 20), which hung in his rear dining room (*achter eetkamer*) according to his 1572 inventory.<sup>160</sup> As I mentioned, Bruegel painted the *Death of the Virgin* (fig. 4) for Ortelius,<sup>161</sup> who clearly displayed it in a semi-public

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<sup>156</sup> In 1551, '53 and '55, profits at the *Pand* fell consistently and from 1555 the number of vacant stalls there increased annually until its closure in 1560, see Ewing, 575; R. van Uytven, 'What is New Socially and Economically in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands', *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae*, VII (1974), 36.

<sup>157</sup> Antwerp City Archives, City Protocols 1563-70, VIII n°1551, dated 21st February, 1565 (new style, 1566), see J. Denucé, *Inventare von Kunstsammlungen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert, Quellen zur Geschichte der flämischen Kunst*, II, Antwerp 1932, 5. The document was drawn-up on the occasion of Jongelinck agreeing to be the guarantor for Daniel de Bruyne, who owed Antwerp magistrates 16,000 Carolus guilders in tax arrears. Jongelinck's art collection was pledged as collateral on this debt. The document is reproduced in translation in Marijnissen (1984), 58<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>158</sup> H. J. van Miegroet, 'The Twelve Months' Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XVI (1986), 29-35; de Tolnay (1935), 71<sup>85</sup>, 82-84.

<sup>159</sup> Jongelinck acquired this house in 1554 and Bruegel's decorations were part of a programme of renovations on which Frans Floris had also been engaged, see van der Velde, 117 and document I, 122-3; I. Buchanan, 'The Collection of Nicolaes Jonghelinck: II The Months by Pieter Bruegel the Elder', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXII (Aug., 1990), 541-50; Grossmann (1973), 195. The identification of Jonghelinck's Bruegels as the pictures showing the described subjects and now in Vienna is confirmed by their provenance. The *Kunsthistorisches'* unsurpassable collection of Bruegels was first assembled by Emperor Rudolf II, who had inherited a number of Bruegels from his elder brother, the Archduke Ernst, who had amassed a sizeable collection of Flemish works on art during his brief tenure as Governor to the Netherlands in 1593-95. Ernst's collection was painstakingly recorded by his secretary Blasius Hütter, who describes a *Carrying of the Cross* and the *Months*, which had previously been described in Jongelinck's inventory. These pictures were given to Ernst in 1566 by the City of Antwerp who had seized them from Jongelinck because de Bruyne defaulted on the repayment of his tax arrears—a debt on which Jongelinck had pledged his art collection as collateral, see above n.157. The *Babel* has the same provenance, see W. Siepl, 'On the Bruegel Paintings in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna', in Siepl (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna*, Milan, 1998, 15-16.

<sup>160</sup> L. Smolderen, 'Tableaux de Jérôme Bosch, de Pierre Bruegel L'Ancien et de Frans Floris Dispersés en vente publique à la monnaie d'anvers en 1572', *Revue Belge D'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*, LXIV (1995), 33-41; J. Muller, 'Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands: Ownership and Display of Paintings in Domestic Interiors', in P. Sutton (ed.) *The Age of Rubens*, Ghent, 1993, 199; C. Goldstein, 'Artifacts of Domestic Life: Bruegel's paintings in the Flemish home', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, LI (2000), 174-193. The relevant archival evidence is contained in the Archives Generales du Royaume, Bruxelles, 3572bis. Three of the remaining four pictures by Bruegel owned by Noirot were probably the *Winter Landscape with a Bird Trap* (1565), *The Wedding Dance* (1566), *The Village Kermis* (c.1567), see Sellink, 35.

<sup>161</sup> There is no reason to doubt that Ortelius was the first owner of the *Death of the Virgin*, which was painted by Bruegel at around the same time as another grisaille, the *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, which is dated 1565. The earliest document associating the *Death of the Virgin* to the geographer is a letter written from Coornhert to Ortelius dated 1578, in which the former thanks the latter for having received an impression of Galle's engraved copy of Bruegel's grisaille (see above n.39, n.119). Coornhert wrote: 'Bruegel and Philips have surpassed themselves. Neither of them, methinks, could have done better. Their friend Abraham Ortelius's favour has spurred on their natural talents, so that this work of art in its artistry shall survive for art-loving artists for all times', from Popham, 187. Coornhert's wording suggests that he was well aware that the brilliance of both Bruegel's grisaille and Galle's engraving was due to Ortelius's intervention, suggesting that Ortelius had commissioned the grisaille as he had done Galle's engraving. An inscription on the Galle engraving, made after Bruegel's grisaille in 1574, further confirms that

room inside his home because Montanus saw it there.<sup>162</sup> Bruegel's *Twelve Proverbs* (1550s) (fig. 21) belonged to the Antwerp banker Nicolaes Cornelius Cheeus.<sup>163</sup> Elsewhere, Hieronimo de Curiel possibly commissioned the *Census at Bethlehem* (fig. 12);<sup>164</sup> the Archduchess Isabella acquired the (or a<sup>165</sup>) *Sermon of St John* (fig. 13); Cardinal Granvelle owned several Bruegels (fig. 2);<sup>166</sup> as did Giulio Clovio.<sup>167</sup> Various other inventories from the 1560s describe Bruegel's—or else Bruegelesque—paintings in the homes of the wealthy, where they are consistently found in grander rooms. The Antwerp businessman Willem Adriansz's 1565 inventory lists a peasant kermis in his second-floor sitting-room.<sup>168</sup> A peasant dance is recorded in the 1568 inventory of Vincent Laureysz, whose kitchen (*kuecken*) in Middelburg it decorated.<sup>169</sup> And Nicolas van Berendrecht's 1567 inventory describes peasant and proverb pictures throughout the main house.<sup>170</sup> There are also instances where collectors, having been unable to acquire Bruegel paintings proper, went to the expense of substituting these with prints or drawings that they mounted onto panel. Evidence for this is found in Andries Jacobsz de Jonghe's 1569 inventory, which specifies that Bruegel's *Elck* (c.1558), *Big Fish Eat the Little Ones* and *Ass at School* (both 1557)—all engravings made by Pieter van der Heyden and issued by Cock (figs. 22-24)<sup>171</sup>—had been pasted onto panels to enable display in de Jonghe's home, probably in a prominent ground floor room (*nederkamer*).<sup>172</sup> This inventory corroborates Grossmann's now demonstrably perceptive theory that Bruegel's *Resurrection* drawing (c.1562) (fig. 25)<sup>173</sup> was pasted onto wood early in its history and treated like a panel painting.<sup>174</sup>

Clearly, therefore, owning Bruegel paintings was the prerogative of the wealthy, predominantly merchants, bankers and humanists. Unlike prints, which could be inexpensive,

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the painting was owned by Ortelius: 'Philips Galle reproduced the prototype by Pieter Bruegel... [and] on behalf of himself and his friends, Abraham Ortelius took care of production', see Orenstein *et al.*, 258. Although Friedländer (as in n.11), 27, conjectured that the grisaille was made as a prototype for print, it has been conclusively demonstrated that this is not the case by Grossmann (1952). Melion has hypothesised that the Ortelius-Galle collaboration to engrave Bruegel's grisaille posthumously was intended as a tribute to Bruegel, to be circulated in similar ways to an "album amicorum", see Melion (1997), 15.

<sup>162</sup> See above n.119.

<sup>163</sup> E. Duverger (ed.), *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, Brussels, 1984, 175; Goldstein, 173. On the matter of attribution of this panel, see J. de Coe, 'Twaalf spreken op borden van Pieter Bruegel de Oude', *Musees Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique Bulletin* (1965), 83ff.

<sup>164</sup> See above, n.74.

<sup>165</sup> It is possible that Bruegel painted two versions of this picture, one now lost and the other in Budapest, one of which is described in Isabella's collection, see Currie and Allart, I, 142-3; and above n.77.

<sup>166</sup> See above n.37.

<sup>167</sup> See above n.17.

<sup>168</sup> H. A. Enno van Gelder (ed.), *Gegevens Betreffende roerend en onroerend bezit in de Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw*, The Hague, 1972-73, I, 510; Kavalier, 54.

<sup>169</sup> Gelder, I, 400; Kavalier, 55.

<sup>170</sup> J. D. Bangs, 'Book and Art Collection of the Low Countries in the later Sixteenth-Century: Evidence from Leiden', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XIII (Spring, 1982), 31, 33.

<sup>171</sup> Orenstein *et al.*, nos. 38-41, pp. 140-44; nos. 58, 59, pp. 166-68.

<sup>172</sup> The term used to describe these works is '3 witte gheprente bardekens' ('three white printed panels'), see Kavalier, 90; Gelder, I, 576.

<sup>173</sup> See Orenstein *et al.*, nos. 96, 97, pp. 221-224.

<sup>174</sup> Grossmann, (1973), 192.

the high prices charged for panel paintings precluded their purchase among the lower and labouring classes, who seldom owned more than a few prints or small, inexpensive panels (*bortijes*).<sup>175</sup> Jongelinck's *Babel*, the *Carrying* and the *Months* were in fact valued exceptionally highly in 1566, at 410 guilders each.<sup>176</sup> The inventories also show that Bruegel's paintings (including de Jonghe's mounted prints) invariably decorated semi-public rooms and there is evidence to suggest that collectors consciously displayed their art in particular rooms according to fashionability to signify wealth and connoisseurship.<sup>177</sup>

Claudia Goldstein, however, has argued that ideological and epistemological determinants also affected where art was displayed in the sixteenth-century home.<sup>178</sup> Artworks were part and parcel of a room's function, and the appropriateness of an artwork for a room was gauged, suggested Goldstein, according to who would have seen it in those rooms.<sup>179</sup> The evidence presented hitherto demonstrates that large expensive pictures belonged in public rooms, where they could be seen by guests. More specifically, paintings showing the production, purveying or consumption of foodstuffs seem to have belonged, for obvious reasons, in *eetcamers*: this is where Noirot showed Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and it has been argued that Bruegel's *Months* originally decorated Jongelinck's *eetkamer*.<sup>180</sup> And as far as we can tell, sixteenth-century collectors generally preferred 'secular art' for dining rooms.<sup>181</sup> Pictures

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<sup>175</sup> A coloured print could be bought for less than 1 denier (1/3 stuiver) per impression, see J. van der Stock, *Printing images in Antwerp: The introduction of printmaking in a city, fifteenth century to 1585*, Rotterdam, 1998, 281-3. A competent painter, by contrast, could earn between 2/5 - 1/2 stuiver a day, which is comparable to the approximate earnings of a stonemason. Exceptional painters, however, such as Frans Floris earned around 20 stuivers a day. Bruegel was on par with Floris and probably demanded a similar salary, see Z. Z. Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp 1550-1700*, Princeton, 1987, 40-3; J. M. Montias, 'Socio-Economic Aspects of Netherlandish Art from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century: A Survey', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXII (Sep., 1990), 361.

<sup>176</sup> See Marijnissen (1984), 48<sup>47</sup>. This price exceeds the average price of an altarpiece during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which on average cost around 350 guilders and only exceptionally breached the 500 guilders mark, see N. Peeters, 'Painters pencils move not without that musicke': Prices of Southern Netherlandish Painted Altarpieces between 1585 and 1650', A. Tummers and K. Jonckheere (eds.), *Art Market and Connoisseurship: A closer look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and their Contemporaries*, Chicago, 2008, 100. Likewise, the maximum price for panel paintings sold at auction in Amsterdam at the turn of the century 1600 rarely exceeded 500 guilders, see M. Prak, 'Painters, Guilds, and the Art Market during the Dutch Golden Age', S. R. Epstein and M. Prak (eds.), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400-1800*, Cambridge, 2008, 149; J. M. Montias, *Art at Auction in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 2002, 89.

<sup>177</sup> Bangs (1982), 32-33. All of the above-mentioned descriptions of Bruegel's paintings hung prominently inside the home, contrasts Marytgen Gerritsdr. van Zyl and Pieter Gerritsz. Smaling's choice, according to their 1587 inventory, to keep an old devotional panel showing *St. Christopher* in a utilitarian room ('*t achterhusken*) separated from the main house by a courtyard, where it is recorded alongside 'some junk'. Such distinctions as these indicate that collectors carefully considered where to display their paintings, distinguishing between the fashionable and unfashionable to signify wealth and connoisseurship.

<sup>178</sup> Goldstein, *passim*.

<sup>179</sup> Goldstein, 173.

<sup>180</sup> Buchanan (Aug., 1990), 549; Goldstein, *passim*.

<sup>181</sup> Hans Fugger, for example, expressly stipulated secular subjects when he commissioned Vincenzo Campi in 1580 to decorate his dining room (*Speisensaal*) inside the Schloss Kirchheim, see G. Lill, *Hans Fugger und die Kunst*, Leipzig, 1908, 136-38; B. de Klerck, *The Brothers Campi: Images and Devotion. Religious Painting in Sixteenth-Century Lombardy*, A. McCormick (trans.), Amsterdam, 1999, 17. In the rare instances when religious pictures are described in dining rooms, they are invariably still about feasting, such as the Last Supper, see Goldstein, 182-3.

showing peasant festivities are generally found in sitting-rooms, *nederkamer* and *kuecken*.<sup>182</sup> The *groote camere*—a grand room analogous to palatial *première chambre*<sup>183</sup>—, meanwhile, seems to have been the favoured location for religious pictures. This is where Anthonis van den Meulene, a wine merchant from Ghent, displayed a painting by an unspecified artist showing the *Conversion of Saul*, according to his 1567 inventory.<sup>184</sup>

Goldstein has also suggested that gender played a determining factor in the hanging of art inside the home. Kitchens were predominantly female spaces in the 1500s, used chiefly by women and household staff.<sup>185</sup> This seems to have affected what art was seen there and inventories describe simpler decorations in kitchens, foremost among these being painted wooden plates illustrating proverbs and moral subjects<sup>186</sup> such as Bruegel's *Twelve Proverbs* and the *Drunkard Pushed Into the Pigsty* (1557), which was possibly owned by Gillis II van Coninxloo (figs. 21, 26).<sup>187</sup> This led Goldstein to conclude that patrician collectors distinguished between artworks which they deemed suitable for viewing in the refined company of (male) friends, inside the home's prominent sociable rooms, from art that was seen inside the home's calamitous, utilitarian and gendered-female spaces.<sup>188</sup> In the former category, paintings would have had a pedagogical function, set-up to be seen by sophisticated individuals as part of a culture that deemed collecting art a gentlemanly pursuit.<sup>189</sup> By contrast, simpler art better suited to the home's functional spaces had more straightforwardly didactic purposes, intended to edify the less well-educated individuals who would have seen it there.<sup>190</sup>

#### THE ORIGINAL LOCATIONS FOR THE *BLIND LEADING THE BLIND* AND THE *CARRYING OF THE CROSS*

Given these correlations between art (subject matters and compositions), location and function, we can now hypothesise about where Bruegel's *Blind* and the *Carrying* originally hung. Nothing is known about the original owner of the *Blind* (cf. Chapter 3) but because this picture shows a

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Adriansz and Laureysz's inventories, above n.168 and n.169.

<sup>183</sup> D. MacDonald, 'Collecting a New World: The Ethnographic Collections of Margaret of Austria', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXXIII (Autumn, 2002), 649-63.

<sup>184</sup> In this instance a "large... *kermis*" was displayed in the main social room in a house at Ghent belonging to the wine merchant Anthonis van den Meulene, see Kavalier, 56; Gelder, I, 467.

<sup>185</sup> Goldstein, 185ff.

<sup>186</sup> Goldstein, 185-91.

<sup>187</sup> Authenticated as autograph in 2000 by R. van Schoute and H. Verougstraete, 'A Painted Wooden Roundel by Pieter Bruegel the Elder', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLII (Mar., 2000), 140-6. On Gillis's inventory and the mention in it to Bruegel's *Drunkard*, see N. de Roever, 'De Coninxloos', *Oud Holland*, III (1885), 33-53. Painted plates are documented in domestic kitchens fairly regularly: Hieronymus Cock had six in his; Maria Boudaen had nine; Gerard Noppen, a dozen; and Jan van Loobosch owned six, see Goldstein, 185; Duverger, 17, 127, 167, 465, 155.

<sup>188</sup> Goldstein, 177-91.

<sup>189</sup> R. V. Lawrence, 'Book Four of Castiglione's Courtier: Climax or Afterthought?', *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIX (1972), 156-79; B. A. Kinch, 'The Functionality of Early Modern Collections', unpublished thesis, Georgia State University, 2011, 3-9; P. Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Los Angeles, 1994.

<sup>190</sup> Goldstein, 185-91.

proverb of Biblical import, and because Bruegel's treatment of the proverb departs significantly from the simpler arrangement typical of proverb plates, I doubt whether this picture would have belonged in a kitchen. Perhaps a sitting-room offers a more suitable alternative, similar to de Jonghe's display of his mounted prints in his *nederkamer*.<sup>191</sup> An *eetkamer* is also conceivable because Christ offered this proverb to criticise the scribes and Pharisees who had objected to the disciples' inobservance of the Judaic custom to wash hands before eating bread. Specific room aside, it is possible that Bruegel's *Blind* originally hanged inside a suburban home near Brussels, since the church in the background of the picture has been identified as St. Anna-Pede in Itterbeek, south of that city.<sup>192</sup> Jongelinck's inventory neglects to specify which room Bruegel's *Carrying* decorated at ter Beke.<sup>193</sup> The *Carrying*, however, is Bruegel's largest extant panel painting (124 x 170cm; roughly 4 x 6 Antwerp *voet* in contemporary parlance<sup>194</sup>) and so a grand room is certain. Its religious subject matter probably made it unsuitable for Jongelinck's *eetkamer*, and perhaps the *groote camere* is more plausible. It is indeed tempting to identify van den Meulene's *Conversion of Saul*, which he displayed in his *groote camere*, as the picture by Bruegel since his inventory and Bruegel's *Conversion* (1567) are exactly contemporary (fig. 27).

The evidence presented up to now demonstrates that Bruegel's paintings were indeed made for an exclusive clientele, who carefully considered where they displayed them inside their homes, to enable particular audiences to see them in particular rooms. I have argued that Bruegel's *Carrying* and *Blind* were originally set-up in grand, public rooms where they could have been seen by visiting, predominantly male, guests. The remainder of this Chapter is dedicated to considering how Bruegel's paintings functioned in such locations.

## TO 'PHILOSOPHISE MORE FREELY': *CONVIVIVM* AND HOMOSOCIABILITY

Amy Orrock has recently argued that in their original contexts, Bruegel's paintings elicited conversation as part of a 'culture in which looking was an active, and, for some, competitive sport'.<sup>195</sup> Margaret Sullivan has also suggested that Bruegel's art was originally used to provoke discussion,<sup>196</sup> and Todd Richardson has recently provided tangible historical acuity to this idea

<sup>191</sup> This picture is also executed on canvas, which, being fragile, again suggests that it would not have been hung in a predominantly functional room such as a kitchen. Indeed, in the 1512 inventory made of Michael van der Heyden's estate, a watercolour on canvas by Quentin Massys or Hieronymus Bosch is listed in his *groote sale*, a grand salon. Similarly, van der Heyden displayed a series of watercolours showing *Seven Virtues and Cognito* in his *nederkamer*, see S.A.A. Gilden en Ambachten, Genealogisch Fonds 50, fols. 28-32.

<sup>192</sup> A. de Vries, *Flanders: A Cultural History*, Oxford and New York, 2007, 232; D. Walton, 'In Bruegel's Footsteps', *Flanders Today*, May 14th 2008, 9.

<sup>193</sup> Marijnissen (1984), 58<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>194</sup> 1 sixteenth-century Antwerp *voet* equates to 28.68cm according to H. Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures anciens et modernes, contenant des tables des monnaies de tous le pays*, Brussels, 1840, 405 and given in Currie and Allart, III, 881. Converted, the dimensions of the *Carrying* thus equal precisely 4.32 x 5.93 voet.

<sup>195</sup> A. Orrocks, 'Homo ludens: Pieter Bruegel's Children's Games and the Humanist Educators', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, IV (2012), 3.

<sup>196</sup> See above n.102.

by considering the *convivium* tradition.<sup>197</sup> Deriving from Antiquity, the *convivium* genre of literature was popular in Bruegel's Antwerp and described the interactions that took place at mealtime when friends gather in the home and enjoy discussions about a range of topics.<sup>198</sup> The ancient authorities each maintained that in the company of friends, dinner provided the opportunity for actual nourishment (the imbibing of food) but also for intellectual nourishment, deriving from conversation, dialogue and debate.<sup>199</sup> Of the ancient examples, however, Macrobius's *Saturnalia* (c.384) was particularly influential.<sup>200</sup> An ineffable document preserving antiquarian lore and social customs, the *Saturnalia* had obvious appeal to intellectuals yearning for the Antique in the sixteenth century.<sup>201</sup> But as a piece of convivial literature, describing conversations that take place over successive occasions between learned men in the home about a variety of topics including religion, grammar, wit and the virtues of a balanced diet, the *Saturnalia* provided a paradigm for convivial domestic sociability in the 1500s. These ideas were revived in Bruegel's Antwerp as one manifestation of the culturally-formed belief that dignified leisure, which was at once conducive to learned enquiry and intellectual exchange but less the rigours of humanistic writing, was a necessary part of the intelligentsia's daily life.<sup>202</sup>

A modern counterpart to ancient convivial literature was provided by Erasmus's *Colloquies*: a series of dialogues published in the 1520s.<sup>203</sup> The *Godly Feast* (1522), for example, describes a dinner party hosted by Eusebius, who has welcomed eight guests into in his countryside villa—which is exactly the scenario in which Bruegel's *Carrying* and *Blind* would have been seen—and the ensuing conversations, which take place as the group move about the villa, encompass scripture and Biblical exegesis, the efficacy of prayer, scriptural truth, and the merits of Proverbs 21:1-3.<sup>204</sup> Importantly, however, the *Godly Feast* explicitly describes art's role in the convivial context, when, at various junctures, Eusebius and his guests pause in front of artworks and discuss their meanings, sometimes to great length. In one part, for example,

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<sup>197</sup> T. Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: art discourse in the sixteenth-century Netherlands*, Ashgate, 2011. The publication of Richardson's book, however, came a little too late and I have consulted the unpublished manuscript, Leiden University, 2007, which is available via the Leiden Repository. All subsequent references to Richardson, including pagination, refer to the manuscript.

<sup>198</sup> Richardson, 73-86.

<sup>199</sup> Theodosius, *Saturnalia*, c.384, P. Vaughan Davies (trans.), New York and London, 1969. Theodosius drew an explicit analogy between the biological processes of transforming food into energy and the process of cognitive strengthening provided by learned discussion, see Davies, 27.

<sup>200</sup> On the matters of authorship and the date of the *Saturnalia*, see A. Cameron, 'The Date and Identity of Macrobius', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, LVI (1966), 25-38.

<sup>201</sup> The *Saturnalia* was indeed published in the sixteenth century, see C. Panayotakis (trans. and ed.) and J. Diggle, N. Hopkinson, J. Powell, M. Reeve, D. Sedley and R. Tarrant (eds.), 'Decimus Laberius: The Fragmanets', *Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries*, XLVI (2010), xvii.

<sup>202</sup> Sullivan (1994), 33; Davies, 3ff.

<sup>203</sup> Richardson, 77; G. Remer, 'Dialogues of Toleration: Erasmus and Bodin', *The Review of Politics*, LVI (Spring, 1994), 308-9; Erasmus, *The Collected works of Erasmus*, Toronto, 1997, I, xvii-xlix; and for the *Godly Feast*, 171ff. Erasmus's *Colloquies*, despite his initial regret about their unauthorised publication, went on to become incredibly popular and became some of the most widely published books of the entire sixteenth century, see Thompson, xxxii.

<sup>204</sup> M. P. Gilmore, 'Erasmus' Godly Feast', C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Leiden, 1974, 505-15.

Eusebius and his guest Timothy have a prolonged discussion in front of a painted grove, during which the two discuss the symbolic significance of the various birds and animals shown:<sup>205</sup>

Eusebius: ... This painted grove you observe, covering the entire wall, presents a varied spectacle....

Timothy: A wonderful variety; nothing inactive, nothing that's not doing or saying something. What does the owl that's almost hidden under the branches tell us?

Eusebius: An Attic owl, it speaks the Attic tongue: 'Be prudent', it says, 'I don't fly for everyone'. It bids us act advisedly, because unadvised rashness brings misfortune to some. ...

Timothy: What does the Swallow carry in its mouth?

Eusebius: Swallowwort, for by this she restores the sight of her blind fledglings.<sup>206</sup>

...

Timothy: Here's a scorpion, a rare pest in these parts but common in Italy. Though to me his colour in the picture doesn't seem convincing.

Eusebius: How so?

Timothy: Because the Italian ones are darker...

Eusebius: But don't you recognise the plan on whose leaf he's fallen?

Timothy: Not well enough.

Eusebius: ... It's Wolfsbane, so poisonous that when a scorpion comes into contact with it he's stunned, turns pale, and surrenders. ...

Timothy: Then this scorpion's done for. ... Do even scorpions talk here?

Eusebius: Yes, and in Greek, too.

Timothy: What does he say?

Eusebius: 'God hath found out the guilty'<sup>207</sup>

Besides discussing symbols and meaning, host and guests in the *Godly Feast* regularly admire artistic virtuosity and the painter's abilities to imitate nature: 'in one' states Eusebius 'we admire the cleverness of nature, in the other the inventiveness of the painter, in each the goodness of God'.<sup>208</sup> One is here reminded of Ortelius's eulogy that likewise pitted Bruegel against Nature and celebrated his imitative facility, which, given Eusebius's statement, may well testify to the kinds of conversations that Ortelius had actually enjoyed with his friends about Bruegel's art.

The *Godly Feast* therefore provides an evocative glimpse at the kinds of activities that learned men conducted in front of artworks inside the home during the 1500s, in which artistic skill, symbols and meaning were all up for discussion. Convivial literature therefore helped justify the generally held belief in the 1500s that collecting and discussing art was a gentlemanly pursuit, and the virtues of homosociability are often remarked upon in *convivium* literature. In the *Saturnalia*, for instance, the lawyer Postumanus states:

the one thing to my mind most worthwhile has been to devote such leisure as I may have... to meeting men of learning [and] talking with them; for nowhere can the educated mind find more useful or more seemly relaxation than in taking some opportunity for learned and polite conversation and friendly discussion.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 180ff.

<sup>206</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 180.

<sup>207</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 181.

<sup>208</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 29-30, 179.

<sup>209</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, Book 1, Chapter 2, taken from Davies, 31-2.



In the *Godly Feast*, Eusebius similarly proclaims that in the company of his male friends in the home, they can ‘philosophize more freely’,<sup>210</sup> stating elsewhere that ‘whatever is devout and contributes to good morals’ is permitted for discussion in the home.<sup>211</sup> In both instances, Eusebius clearly provided a mouthpiece for Erasmus, who thought that amicable discussion conducted in the home provided the ideal forum to discuss faith.<sup>212</sup> To support this position, Erasmus and his contemporaries could point to the different rhetorical methods used in Antiquity. In the ancient world, public orators were encouraged to manipulate their audience by toying with their emotions, thus compelling them to arrive at the proper (that is the orator’s) point of view.<sup>213</sup> This contrasted the decorum relative to private dialogue, where tolerance was encouraged to allow philosophical discussions to take place and amicable resolutions to be reached.<sup>214</sup> To cite Cicero from the *Tusculanae disputationes* (a series of books written in Cicero’s villa at Tusculum): ‘let everyone defend his views, for judgment is free: I shall cling to my rule and without being tied to the laws of any single school’.<sup>215</sup> Cicero went on to discriminate the masses, which is antiphilosophical, from the learned elite, who are able to discuss complex matters philosophically in private.<sup>216</sup> These ancient authorities clearly influenced the sixteenth-century conception of conviviality for in the *Godly Feast* Eusebius remarks that ‘whether it’s correct [i.e. the point under discussion] I don’t know; I’m satisfied the idea isn’t irreverent or heretical’.<sup>217</sup> And elsewhere during a discussion about the primacy of scripture, Eusebius and his guests agree that Christian liberty should be encouraged and that inner spirituality, divested of religious or political constraints, constitutes the ideal faith.<sup>218</sup>

#### BRUEGEL: MAKING ART FOR CONVIVIAL CONSUMPTION

Considering the popularity of *convivium* literature and Erasmus in Bruegel’s milieu, it is likely that the convivial context constitutes the original settings in which Bruegel’s paintings were seen.<sup>219</sup> Developing ideas from Antiquity, Erasmus’s literature legitimised philosophical enquiry in private, encouraging well-informed individuals to gather and hold tolerant, amicable, discussions about a variety of topics including faith so as to derive moral and spiritual

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<sup>210</sup> Eusebius expressly excludes his wife from such gatherings by referring to her as ‘the countess of the kitchen’, later elaborating when questioned about excluding his wife that ‘What would she be now but a mute? As a woman, she prefers to gossip with women; and we philosophize more freely...’, see Thompson, 56.

<sup>211</sup> T. Martin, *Living Words: Studies in Dialogues about Religion*, Atlanta, 1998, 294.

<sup>212</sup> See above n.116, n.117.

<sup>213</sup> Quintilian, *Institutione Oratoria*, 5, 14, 29 wrote that ‘unless [orators] force, and occasionally throw [the audience] off their balance by an appeal to their emotions, we shall be unable to vindicate the claims of truth and justice.’ quoted from Remer, 318.

<sup>214</sup> Remer, *passim*.

<sup>215</sup> Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, 4. 4. 7, quoted from Remer, 306.

<sup>216</sup> Remer, 318-9.

<sup>217</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 185.

<sup>218</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 174.

<sup>219</sup> Richardson, Ch.2.

guidance.<sup>220</sup> In such a context, Bruegel's art provided visual stimulus to conversation and I would like to suggest that Bruegel deliberately and self-consciously tailored his art to such settings and usages, and that his paintings were underscored by a pedagogical and didactic—rather than polemical—agenda.

Relevant in this connexion is the story from Antiquity of Timon the Misanthrope, which told of a once-wealthy man whose descent into poverty, wrought on partly by dishonest friends, caused him to revile mankind and withdraw from the world to pursue a life of solitude. Timon's story was well known in the 1500s and often featured in contemporary emblems. Emblems inundated the lives of the average Netherlander, appearing in book compilations, on tapestries, clothes, wall paintings and chinaware and many in Bruegel's circle were directly involved with their production.<sup>221</sup> Plantin, in particular, published many emblem books including Johannes Sambucus's *Emblemata* (1564).<sup>222</sup> Sambucus's book included a page showing *Μισάνθρωπος Τίμων* (Timon the Misanthrope) (fig. 28), along with the following *subscriptio*:<sup>223</sup>

... Those who withdraw from their pleasant friends and from sweet company, bear severe as you can, associate yourself with an intimate companion, so that he alleviates the pressure... Those who engage in no conversation whatsoever, and are without pleasant friendship and supporting contacts,... you can consider them stupid and their hearts hollow.<sup>224</sup>

Earlier in the century Erasmus had expounded Timon's story to encourage Christians to withdraw from the 'common herd', among whom sin is congenial, but to recognise that true friendships have moral and pedagogical values.<sup>225</sup> Given the importance assigned to friendship among the *mediocriter literati* and the currency of convivial literature, Timon's story had obvious appeal in sixteenth-century and it is therefore significant that Bruegel also painted the *Misanthrope* (1568) (fig. 29). This picture demonstrates that Bruegel was familiar with Timon's story, and by extension suggests his awareness about the importance attached to convivial friendship among his peers and patrons and, therefore, the context in which his art was viewed.

Bruegel's remarkably novel imagery should therefore be described as bespoke, by which I mean that Bruegel deliberately conceived his pictures to suit the settings in which they were seen so as to stimulate discussion. In an often overlooked article published in 1959, Kenneth Lindsay and Bernard Huppé argued this point, suggesting that Bruegel's pictorial strategy

<sup>220</sup> Thompson, xxv, xxxi.

<sup>221</sup> Nuti, 45.

<sup>222</sup> Sambucus, *Emblemata cum aliquot nummis antiqui operis*, Antwerp, 1564, see L. Voet, *The Plantin Press, 1555-1589: a Bibliography of the Works printed and published by Christopher Plantin at Antwerp and Leiden*, Amsterdam, 1980-1983, 5 vols, V, 2168. Plantin published many books and Plantin is sometimes credited with the introduction of the emblem book to the Low Countries, when he published C. Paradin and G. Symeon's *Les devices héroïques* in 1561, see Sullivan (1994), 10<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>223</sup> Sambucus, *Emblemata*, 1564, A. Buck (comp.), Budapest, 1982. Facsimile reprint of the 1564 edition, fol. H7<sup>v</sup>, pp. 107.

<sup>224</sup> Buck, fol. H7<sup>v</sup>, pp 126.

<sup>225</sup> Thompson, 542-3.

should be defined as ‘intentional quasi-obscurity’.<sup>226</sup> It is well-trodden ground to observe that Bruegel’s art contains no dead give-aways where meaning is concerned, and that the acquisition of meaning(s) depends on the recognition of deliberate contrasts and juxtapositions, often centring on key motifs that provide a composition’s organising principle, besides the processing of an endless profusion of details. Lindsay and Huppé, however, suggested that this strategy had an underlying epistemological-aesthetic theory deriving from St. Augustine’s *De doctrina Christiana* (397-426).<sup>227</sup> For Augustine, all poetry (and this includes painting) comprises “sense” (the story) and “sentence” (its underlying meanings), and Augustine ventured that the apprehension of meaning is more enjoyable and likely to be retained when it is apprehended with difficulty: ‘when something is searched for with difficulty, it is, as a result, more delightfully discovered’.<sup>228</sup> Analogously, as the eye roams over a picture by Bruegel, various obvious themes or motifs are encountered, which have to be interpreted and assimilated with other themes and motifs to enable a meaningful overall impression of the picture’s predominant significances or meanings to be gained, thus provoking analytical looking of the type frequently encountered in *convivium* literature. Evidence that such viewing was actually conducted in the sixteenth century is again provided by emblems, whose allegorical imagery combined with text that is often prolix and obscure, are products of a culture that prioritised the acquisition of knowledge gained from intellectual endeavour, for which foreknowledge and an ability to decipher was a prerequisite.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, in the preface to Sambucus’s *Emblemata*, we are told that the emblem book was conceived ‘not for the vulgar ignorant who only look for things that are a simple recreation of the eye’ and elsewhere Sambucus reminds the reader that emblem decipherment was supposed to ‘instruct and to delight’.<sup>230</sup> Such exhortations as these, to look beyond the surface and to derive pleasure from inquisitive looking, may well aptly describe the mindset of a sixteenth-century person standing in front of Bruegel’s paintings.

## CONCLUSION

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions about how Bruegel’s *Carrying* and *Blind* were originally seen. Displayed in a prominent room inside the home, these pictures would have been seen and discussed by cultured individuals gathered there by invitation. In front of them,

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<sup>226</sup> K. C. Lindsay and B. Huppé, ‘Meaning and Method in Brueghel’s Painting’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XIV (Mar., 1956), 376-86. In many ways, this article advanced ideas presented by Valentin Denis in 1952, who observed that ‘[Bruegel’s] learned contemporaries had a passion for discoveries, and Bruegel... had no difficulty in endowing many of his works... with the appearance of riddles which he deliberately made more obscure’, Denis, *Tutta la pittura di Pieter Bruegel*, Milan, 1952.

<sup>227</sup> Lindsay and Huppé, 377.

<sup>228</sup> Lindsay and Huppé, 379.

<sup>229</sup> Nuti, 38-55

<sup>230</sup> A. S. Q Visser, *Joannes Sambucus and the Learned Image. The Use of the Emblem in Late-Renaissance Humanism*, Leiden, 2005, xxiv.

such individuals likely conducted discussions about the pictures, similar to the ones described in Erasmus's *Colloquia*. Particularly relevant in Erasmus's *Godly Feast* is that Proverbs were clearly part of the convivial repertoire, since Bruegel's *Blind* is inspired by a proverb. Additionally, the lengthy discussion conducted between Eusebius and Thomas about the painted grove demonstrates that particular motifs, construed as symbols, were often subjected to lengthy interpretation, which is pertinent to my analysis of Bruegel's *Carrying*. The foregoing historical sketch aptly illustrates Iser's theory of reception, in which capable readers bring meanings to a text/image by responding to the author's/artist's strategies to construct a meaningful narrative. I have also suggested that Bruegel deliberately conceived his art with such settings in mind, producing paintings that promoted tolerant discussion and analytical viewing, which is compatible with the tolerant views prevalent among Bruegel's milieu and negates the supposition that Bruegel's art was intended or understood as propaganda.

## Chapter 2:

### THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

The *Carrying of the Cross* (fig. 15) is Bruegel's largest extant panel painting.<sup>231</sup> The picture is well preserved and lateral barbes indicate that it has not been cut down.<sup>232</sup> The subject of Christ's procession to Calvary was popular in sixteenth-century Netherlandish art, and another version by Bruegel (lost) is described in Filip van Valckenisse's 1614 inventory.<sup>233</sup> The picture here under discussion, however, is obviously the one owned by Jongelinck, who displayed it at 't Goet ter Beke.<sup>234</sup> I have proposed that Jongelinck displayed it in his *groote camere* or similar.

### ICONOGRAPHY

Joseph Gregory has argued that Bruegel's *Carrying* belongs to an iconographic tradition for representing Christ's procession to Golgotha that originated in a lost painting by Jan van Eyck (c.1395-1441), and known through derivative paintings (fig. 30).<sup>235</sup> Gregory argued that van Eyck's picture, which showed Christ's procession to Golgotha in a densely populated arc that sweeps across the composition along which the static figure of Christ is shown at the foreground, should be explained according to late medieval devotional practice. Religious movements including the *Devotio Moderna* (founded 1379<sup>236</sup>) promoted a subjective emphasis to religious experience that dwelled on the sufferings of Christ to inspire the devotee's compassion and contrition.<sup>237</sup> Van Eyck's and similar pictures from the fifteenth century (fig. 31) related to this development by providing visual stimulus to emphatic contemplation of

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<sup>231</sup> Until recently the *Carrying* was thought to be the largest extant painting by Bruegel. It is, however, only the largest panel painting as the *Wine of St. Martin's Day*, a painting done on canvas that was confirmed as being autograph in 2011, is in fact the largest surviving painting by Bruegel's hand. The findings first became known to me during a paper delivered by G. Finaldi, 'Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "The Wine of the Feast of Saint Martin"', Courtauld Institute of Art, 10th Dec., 2011; See also M. Sellink and P. Silva Maroto, 'The rediscovery of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "Wine of St. Martin's Day" acquired for the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid', *The Burlington Magazine*, CLIII (Dec., 2011), 784-93.

<sup>232</sup> Currie and Allart, I, 246.

<sup>233</sup> The entry in the inventory reads '*Eenen Cruysdragher van Peter Bruegel*'. The notary was particularly discerning and detailed when compiling Valckenisse's inventory, and was sure to distinguish works by Bruegel ('*Peter Bruegel*' alias '*Ouden Bruegel*') from those made after Bruegel ('*na den Ouden Bruegel*') or by Pieter II ('*Helschen Brughel*'), see Currie and Allart, I, 72-3.

<sup>234</sup> See above n.157, n.158, n.159.

<sup>235</sup> J. F. Gregory, 'Toward the Contextualisation of Pieter Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*. Constructing the Beholder within the Eyckian Tradition', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXXVII (1996), 207-19. F. Winkler argued that there are several derivatives of van Eyck's composition, each dateable to the early 1500s, which all record with varying degrees of fidelity van Eyck's lost prototype, see Winkler, 'Über verschollene Bilder der Brüder Van Eyck', *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XXXVII (1916), 291-93; see also W. Schöne, 'Über einige altniederländische Bilder, vor allem in Spanien', *Jahrbuch der königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, LVIII (1937), 1574. The painting in Budapest is usually considered the best of these derivatives and is dated to the early 1530s, see A. Grisebach, 'Architekturen auf niederländischen und französischen Gemälden des 15. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der Formensprache der nordischen Renaissance. II.', *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, V (Jul., 1912), 2652.

<sup>236</sup> By Geert Groote, see R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Leiden, 1968, x.

<sup>237</sup> For the establishment, development and beliefs of the *Devotio Moderna* see J. van Engen, *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, New York, 1988.

Christ's suffering, which they achieved by borrowing certain devices from *Andachtsbilder*.<sup>238</sup> *Andachtsbilder* is a term used to describe devotional pictures showing holy figures that are extracted from a narrative context and presented in emotionally powerful vignettes.<sup>239</sup> Pictures such as van Eyck's introduced these vignettes into narrative painting, showing foregrounded divine figures, who, static and immobile, often gaze out beyond the picture to encourage the viewer's compassion and spiritual self-reflection.<sup>240</sup> To guarantee this response, fifteenth-century artists also often introduced contemporary people into pictures showing Christ's Passion, who, shown in modern dress and variously acting piously or irreverently, functioned as pictorial 'surrogates'<sup>241</sup> for the viewer, compelling the devotee to recognise their own status as good or bad Christians.<sup>242</sup>

However, Gregory discerned how in the sixteenth century Luther's reformation registered a reciprocal evolution of this iconography. Artists such as Herri met de Bles (c.1510-c.55) updated the processional format inherited from the fifteenth century by incorporating it into *Weltlandschaft* (world landscape) imagery (figs. 32, 33).<sup>243</sup> In the resultant pictures, the vignettes borrowed from *Andachtsbilder* are often scarcely discernible, pushed back into vast landscapes that are populated by countless, still contemporary, spectators. This iconographic subversion, which prioritises the profane and subordinates the sacred, effaced the emotional-spiritual efficacy of *Andachtsbilder* and their fifteenth-century derivatives and, as Gregory suggests, this may relate to the prevailing sense of spiritual crisis in the Low Countries during the early 1500s.<sup>244</sup> Unlike their fifteenth-century precursors, these sixteenth-century pictures no longer affirmed the transcendental triumph of Christ's Passion for the venerating viewer. Rather, they functioned to provoke exegetical engagement, encouraging the viewer to search for Christ and simultaneously consider how such iconographic subversion relates to contemporary religious crises: 'The function of the viewer', wrote Gregory 'passes from veneration, supplication, meditation, or emphatic devotion to exegesis.'<sup>245</sup>

Bruegel's *Carrying* continues the sixteenth-century type, showing Christ's procession to Golgotha in a panoramic landscape and in a circular composition, in which Christ is barely

<sup>238</sup> The seminal text on this matter is S. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative. The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, Doornspijk, 1984.

<sup>239</sup> Ringbom, *passim*, esp., 6.

<sup>240</sup> Gregory, 207-19; Ringbom, 6, 11-52, 107-55.

<sup>241</sup> To borrow the term used by L. D. Gelfand and W. S. Gibson to describe the purposes and functions of donor and donatrix portraits in fifteenth-century religious pictures, see 'Surrogate Selves: The "Rolin Madonna" and the Late Medieval Devotional Portrait', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXIX (2002), 119-38.

<sup>242</sup> The literature on this matter is vast, but the reader is directed in the first instance to J. Marrow, 'Circumdederunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *The Art Bulletin*, LIX (Jun., 1977), 167-81.

<sup>243</sup> On *Weltlandschaft* imagery see N. Muller, B. J. Rosasco and J. Marrow (eds.), *Herri Met de Bles: studies and explorations of the world landscape tradition*, Turnhout, 1998; Gibson, 'Mirror of the Earth'. *The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting*, Princeton, 1989, xx.

<sup>244</sup> Gregory, 207-16.

<sup>245</sup> Gregory, 216.

discernible among a crowd of contemporary tormentors. As Gregory suggested, by its very nature such a composition engenders analytical viewing of the type that I have argued took place in the convivial environment in front of Bruegel's paintings. Bruegel, however, increased the exegetical potential of his picture by including two particularly idiosyncratic features: the windmill and the prominent pious group (figs. 34, 35).<sup>246</sup> The massif with the windmill plays an important compositional role, acting like the hub of a wheel and providing a central axis for the processing crowd as swings across the composition (fig. 15). Completely distinct from this procession is the pious group, who are not only literally separated from Christ's tormentors on a plateau at the picture's foreground, but also have a decidedly primitive, fifteenth-century style and exhibit extremely reverent behaviour in contrast to the irreverence witnessed behind them. Describing these juxtapositions, Roger Marijnissen has wrote 'we do not know why Bruegel introduced this contrast, but his motive was probably religious'.<sup>247</sup> He also notes that 'the windmill on the hilltop is so conspicuous that... it must have some symbolic significance, but no convincing explanation has yet been offered.'<sup>248</sup> Bruegel's bizarre mill and rock does indeed present a discordant note in a picture that otherwise has a believably everyday quality—a Flemish Golgotha—which suggests that Bruegel intended for the mill to be recognised as anomalous by its original viewers and thus a topic of conversation. We have already seen in the *Godly Feast* that symbols were part of the convivial repertoire when Timothy and Eusebius conducted a lengthy discussion about the symbolic significances of Eusebius's painted grove.<sup>249</sup> Here, therefore, I will be considering the symbolic status of windmills in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art to offer some possibilities about the likely meaning(s) elicited by Bruegel's mill in the convivial environment. I will argue that the mill was fundamental in Bruegel's picture, engendering meaningful understandings on the part of the viewer about the juxtaposition between the pious group and Christ's tormentors, with a view to promoting moral self-fashioning.

#### THE WINDMILL AS SYMBOL: THE EUCHARIST AND REDEMPTION

Windmills and mills of other kinds feature fairly regularly in medieval and early modern European art. They feature in manuscripts, such as the twelfth-century "Windmill Psalter"<sup>250</sup> and (?)Jan van Eyck's *Kiss of Judas* from the Heures de Turin-Milan.<sup>251</sup> Windmills and mills of

<sup>246</sup> Most critics point to these as the most unusual features of Bruegel's *Carrying*, see for example Sellink, 191-2.

<sup>247</sup> Marijnissen (1984), 46.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 180-81.

<sup>250</sup> On the dating and identification of this manuscript see, M.A. Michael, 'Oxford, Cambridge and London: towards a theory for 'grouping' gothic manuscripts', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXX (Feb., 1998), 107-115, esp. 113.

<sup>251</sup> Debate abounds about the specific involvement that Hubert and/or Jan van Eyck had in the illuminating of the *Heures* in the early fifteenth-century, once the incomplete half of the manuscript had been detached from the painted half by Robinet d'Etampes, who acquired the entire manuscript in its incomplete form from the John, Duc de Berry

other kinds also feature in paintings by van Eyck and his circle, Hans Memling (c.1430-94) and Hieronymus Bosch (c.1450-1516) also painted mills regularly, which are discussed at length below.<sup>252</sup> Closer chronologically to Bruegel are the mills featuring in the devotional panels attributed to the so-called Master of the Female Half-Lengths (fl. 1530s, Antwerp<sup>253</sup>). Meanwhile, an obtrusively large windmill features in a sixteenth-century *Carrying* usually attributed to the Brunswick Monogrammist (fig. 36),<sup>254</sup> which may have been familiar to Bruegel if Simone Bergmans is correct in identifying the Brunswick Monogrammist as Maaik Verhulst Bessemers, Bruegel's mother-in-law.<sup>255</sup>

Standard reference books on Christian iconography are mostly silent on mills.<sup>256</sup> Alison Kettering has analysed mills in seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings and concluded that the mill was topographical and signified technological advancement and rural plenty.<sup>257</sup> Kettering, however, also mentioned the mill's religious symbolism in sixteenth-century Netherlandish art, and Adelaide Bennett and James Pierce have both interpreted the windmill in art as being religiously symbolic. Bennett interpreted the mill in the "Windmill Psalter" as an allegory for the dust of evil driven away by Divine intervention.<sup>258</sup> Pierce similarly argued that Memling's watermills and Bruegel's windmill were intended as Eucharistic symbols deriving from John 6:51-52 ('I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life

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(1340-1416) between 1412 and '13. Half of the manuscript remained in the possession of Robinet's descendants until the late nineteenth-century and was lost to the Nazis. The extant half, however, found its way from Robinet's possession into the collection of John of Bavaria (1374-1425) the first Bishop of Liège, who probably attempted to have the decorations in his gatherings completed and chose Hubert van Eyck to execute, or else oversee, this project. For some reason this campaign was abandoned, possibly following John's resignation from office in 1417, after which John took control of Holland. John settled in the Hague as Count of Holland and appointed Jan van Eyck as his *valet de chambre*. It was probably around this time that John reinstated the project to complete the *Heures*, assigning the task of completing the manuscript left unfinished by Hubert to Jan. The *Kiss of Judas* was done when the manuscript was in John's possession, and connoisseurs have conventionally identified the hand of Jan in its execution, see G. Hulin de Loo, *Heures de Milan*, Brussels and Paris, 1911, who originally proposed the van Eycks' involvement, and the *Judas folio* was included in Friedländer's volume on Jan, see Friedländer (as in n.11), I, pl 29, 48. On the origins and provenance of the *Heures*, see Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting. Its Origins and Character*, Harvard, 1971, I, 42-45, 232-40.

<sup>252</sup> Friedländer (as in n.11), I, pls. 29, 38, 86.

<sup>253</sup> See Friedländer (as in n.11), XII, pls. 36-8, pp. 18-21 and for a discussion about the subsequent literature and hypotheses about the identification and activity of the Master see the editor's note, 134.

<sup>254</sup> Friedländer (as in n.11), XII, pl.124, pp. 49.

<sup>255</sup> S. Bergmans, 'Le Problème Jan van Hemessen - Monogrammist de Brunswick', *Revue Belge D'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*, XXIV (1955), 133-57; idem, 'Le problème du Monogrammist de Brunswick', *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, XIV (1965), 143-62.

<sup>256</sup> J. Hall gives the windmill as an attribute of Don Quixote from Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, 1605, and considers toy windmills (whirligigs) as an attribute for the Allegory of Air, see Hall (ed.), *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, 2nd ed., Boulder, 2008, 352. J. Speake, *The Dent Dictionary of Symbols in Christian Art*, London, 1995, 156 gives the windmill as an occasional attribute of St. Victor, but this seems erroneous, since no example is provided and nor is there any relevance to windmills in the legend of the Saint's life.

<sup>257</sup> A. M. Kettering, 'Landscape with sails: the windmill in Netherlandish prints', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXXIII (2007/2008), 67-80.

<sup>258</sup> A. Bennett, 'The Windmill Psalter: The Historiated Letter E of Psalm 1', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLIII (1980), 52-67.



of the world').<sup>259</sup> Since mills produce flour from which bread is made, their Eucharistic associations seem logical. Mills were indeed used to signify Christ and the Redemption in fourteenth-century hymns and other devotional literature. In Guillaume de Digulleville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (c.1330<sup>260</sup>), for example, Christ's body was described as Heavenly grain, which had been beaten and ground by the windmill whose sails had been turned by the 'false wind of envy', meaning Pilate, the Romans, and Christ's tormentors who scourged Him on the way to Calvary.<sup>261</sup> Although Guillaume here attributed the movement of the mill's sails to wickedness, he nevertheless described how this yielded mankind's redemption.

These associations between mills and the Eucharist clearly had considerable currency, giving rise to the iconography of the Mystic Mill, which shows Mary and the Evangelists pouring grain into a mill that produces Eucharistic wafers and the Christ Child.<sup>262</sup> Otto Kurz has stated that the earliest known example of this iconography appears in a 1414 German manuscript (fig. 37).<sup>263</sup> It is in fact much older, having been sculptured on a twelfth-century capital in the nave of the Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vézelay (fig. 38).<sup>264</sup> The Mystic Mill was also the subject of a manuscript illumination made around 1400<sup>265</sup> and an elaborate version features on a c.1450 stained glass window in the choir of the Münster at Bern.<sup>266</sup> The subject was also shown on several large altar paintings in the fifteenth-century: a version is preserved in Ulm (fig. 39) and it was the subject of the altarpiece that Bernardo de Lazzaro commissioned Pietro Calzetta to paint in 1466 for the Chapel of the Eucharist in Sant'Antonio, Padua (fig. 40).<sup>267</sup>

The surviving literature and artworks therefore suggest that mills in religious art were indeed symbolic. Like the Mystical Wine Press or Fountain of Salvation, the Mystic Mill belongs to that category of religious iconography that attempted to give intangible concepts tangible

<sup>259</sup> J. S. Pierce, 'Memling's mills', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, J. R. Sommerfeldt (ed.), Kalamazoo, 1966, II, 111-19; idem, 'The Windmill on the Road to Calvary', *New Lugano Review*, (1976), 48-55, 92.

<sup>260</sup> Guillaume de Digulleville, *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, 1330, rev. 1355, see J. J. Stürzinger (ed.), *Le pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, London, 1893; Y. Pinson, 'Hieronymus Bosch: Homo viator at a Crossroads: A new reading of the Rotterdam Tondo', *Artibus et Historiae*, XXVI (2005), 574, 59-60.

<sup>261</sup> W. Gibson, 'Bosch's Boy with a Whirligig: Some Iconographic Speculations', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VIII (1975-1976), 12.

<sup>262</sup> C. W. Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg', *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXXIX (Autumn, 1986), 425.

<sup>263</sup> O. Kurz, 'A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVIII (Jan. - Jun., 1955), 35-53.

<sup>264</sup> First photographed and published in D.W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspective* (Princeton, 1962), 290.

<sup>265</sup> L. M. C. Randall, 'Games and the Passion in Pucelle's Hours of Jeanne d'Évreux', *Speculum*, XLVII (Apr., 1972), 251-54, ill., 8.

<sup>266</sup> H. R. Hahnloser, *Chorfenster und Altäres des Berner Müsters*, Bern, 1950; idem, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Schweiz*, VIII (1960), 304.

<sup>267</sup> The agreement drawn up between Lazzaro and Calzetta survives in the Getty Research Institute together with a sketch attached to the agreement that was made by Bartolomeo de san Vito, which records what the altarpiece was supposed to look like, see C. Semenzato, *Le pitture del Santo di Padova*, Milan, 1984, 132, <sup>56</sup>; M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy. A Primer in the History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, 1972, 8.

visual expression.<sup>268</sup> Clothing the abstract in familiar form (symbols and allegories) has, since Panofsky, come to be recognised as a leitmotif in early Netherlandish painting<sup>269</sup> and so Bruegel's original audience are likely to have considered the symbolic significances of the mill in his *Carrying*. Hitherto, I have enumerated the positive associations of mills, and Pierce concluded that Bruegel's windmill was intended as a symbol of the Eucharist and redemption.<sup>270</sup> Manfred Sellink likewise concluded, albeit without explanation and despite calling Bruegel's *Carrying* 'bewilderingly complex and enigmatic', that Bruegel's windmill carried conventional Eucharistic associations.<sup>271</sup> This may of course have been one interpretation offered during a discussion about Bruegel's picture and a learned individual such as Jongelinck may well have inquired about the Eucharistic symbolism of mills in relation to Bruegel's *Carrying*. To be sure, Guillaume's *Pèlerinage* was still being published in Antwerp in the 1500s.<sup>272</sup>

All the known instances of Mystic Mills, however, are to be found in works that had overtly devotional purposes: manuscripts, altarpieces, Church architecture and coloured windows. It is an erroneous supposition that everything deemed symbolic in art has one source or referent—Ernst Gombrich called this the 'dictionary fallacy'<sup>273</sup>—and when analysing symbols and their meanings, decorum, meaning appropriateness in terms of locations and iconography, is of the utmost importance. In a liturgical artwork or any other work whose *a priori* purpose was to assist devotion, the mill's positive associations were *de rigueur*. Likewise, the Master of the Female Half-Lengths' mills, which feature in pictures that were presumably set-up in the home for personal devotion (fig. 41),<sup>274</sup> probably did carry Eucharistic associations, since here the mill's positive meanings in no way compete with the predominant spiritual associations of a devotional picture showing the Virgin and Child. Bruegel's windmill, however, presides over a picture whose iconography is not immediately conducive to supplication or devotion.<sup>275</sup> Furthermore, Bruegel's picture promotes a decidedly pessimistic view of humanity, in which even Simon of Cyrene fails to fulfil his conventional compassionate

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<sup>268</sup> Panofsky (1971), 209; E. Underhill, 'The Fountain of Life: An Iconographical Study', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, XVII (May, 1910), 99-109; H. L. M. Defoer, 'Pieter Aertsen: "The Mass of St. Gregory with the Mystic Winepress"', *Master Drawings*, XVIII (Summer, 1980), 134-41, 197; L. Brand Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck*, Princeton, 1971, 11-13, 66-70.

<sup>269</sup> See Panofsky (1971); above n.99, n.100.

<sup>270</sup> Pierce (1976), 48-55, 92.

<sup>271</sup> Sellink, 191-2.

<sup>272</sup> Two versions were published in Antwerp in 1501 and '25, see R. Marijnissen, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works*, C. M. and F. Shapiro (eds.), T. Atkins (trans.), New York, 1987, 58<sup>116</sup>.

<sup>273</sup> E. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1978, 11-13.

<sup>274</sup> Friedländer (as in n.11), XII, 18.

<sup>275</sup> According to Gregory's arguments, see above n.245.

role (fig. 42).<sup>276</sup> In terms of decorum, therefore, the conjectured Eucharistic associations of Bruegel's mill are incompatible with the overall imagery of the picture and its attendant exegetical function in the domestic, as opposed to religious, setting. Therefore, we might venture that the windmill had other associations that *are* compatible with the pessimistic view of mankind that Bruegel's picture promotes. Indeed, the negative possibilities of windmills were as well-established by Bruegel's time as its Eucharistic ones. As we have seen, Guillaume attributed sinister motivations to the turning of the mill's sails and Dante Alighieri used the windmill in Canto 34 of the *Inferno* to evoke the waving of Satan's wings.<sup>277</sup> Chaucer, a little later, used the mill for its sexual equivocity.<sup>278</sup> Reindert Falkenburg has also categorised Joachim Patinir's (fl.1515-24) mills as symbols for the world overcome by sin albeit without fuller analysis.<sup>279</sup>

#### MILLS IN HIERONYMUS BOSCH'S ART, PROVERBS, *REDERIJKER* CULTURE AND EMBLEMS

Bruegel's debt to Bosch was not lost on his contemporaries—Lampsonius, we recall, introduced Bruegel as the 'new Jerome Bosch'<sup>280</sup>—and significantly, Bosch painted windmills regularly, featuring in: the *Crucifixion* (after 1477<sup>281</sup>) (fig. 43), which includes a donor portrait and probably originally formed the central panel of a triptych;<sup>282</sup> the *Stone Operation* (after 1488<sup>283</sup>) (fig. 44); the right wing of the *Temptation of St. Anthony* triptych (after 1495<sup>284</sup>) (fig. 45); the *Epiphany* triptych (c.1500<sup>285</sup>) (fig. 46); and on the reverse of another *Carrying of the Cross*

<sup>276</sup> W. Gibson, 'Imitatio Christi': The Passion Scenes of Hieronymus Bosch', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VI (1972-1973), 86; U. Ulbert-Schede, *Das Andachtsbild des kreuztragenden Christus in der deutschen Kunst von Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 16. J'ahrhunderts: eine ikonographische Untersuchung*, Munich, 1968, 26-9.

<sup>277</sup> R. M. Durling (ed. and trans.), *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Inferno*. Oxford, 1996, I, 534-35, 542.

Incidentally, at least one scholar has speculated about Bruegel's familiarity with Dante's *Inferno*, see R. Graziani, 'Pieter Bruegel's "Dulle Griet" and Dante', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXV (Apr., 1973), 209-19.

<sup>278</sup> R. Delasanta, 'The Mill in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*', *The Chaucer Review*, XXXVI (2002), 270-6.

<sup>279</sup> R. Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir: Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life*, M. Hoyle (trans.), Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1988, 66.

<sup>280</sup> Lampsonius (1572), as in n.1.

<sup>281</sup> This date is the terminus post quem provided by dendrochronological analysis carried out on the oak support of this painting, see B. Vermet, 'Hieronymus Bosch: painter, workshop or style?', in J. Koldewij, P. Vandenbroeck and B. Vermet (eds.), *Hieronymus Bosch The Complete Paintings and Drawings*, exh. cat., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2001, 84-100, esp., 88.

<sup>282</sup> Original barbes revealed by the removal of an integral frame suggest that the this panel once had adjoining wings, see Marijnissen (1987), 346; C. Stroo, P. Syfer-d'Olne, A. Dubois, R. Slachmuylders, N. Toussaint (eds.), *The Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Bouts, Gerard David, Colijn de Coter and Goossen van der Weyden Groups (The Flemish Primitives. Catalogue of the Early Netherlandish Painting in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium*, Brussels, 2001, III, 71-83.

<sup>283</sup> Vermet, 88.

<sup>284</sup> Vermet, 88.

<sup>285</sup> This retable's oak support could not be dated by dendrochronology, but is conventionally dated to around 1500 (see L. Brand Philip, 'The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch', *The Art Bulletin*, XXXV (Dec., 1953), 267-93), given the triptych's standing alongside other mature works by Bosch such as the *Haywain* in the Prado, which has been dated to the last years of Bosch's life (†1516) by dendrochronology. The version of the *Haywain* in the Escorial cannot be by Bosch, since dendrochronological analysis revealed a terminus post quem of 1533, see Vermet, 88.

(c.1485<sup>286</sup>), which must originally have formed the left wing of a small triptych,<sup>287</sup> Bosch painted a naked child using a walking frame and holding a whirligig (toy mill) (fig. 47).

Bosch's mills are particularly relevant to Bruegel's not only iconographically but also because of locations. Although Bosch occasionally painted altarpieces,<sup>288</sup> the majority of his paintings (which for the most part feature, or else originally featured, on triptychs) were intended for homes.<sup>289</sup> Divested of liturgical function, Bosch accordingly suffused his triptychs with secular imagery, often inspired by proverbs and folklore, to be seen and interpreted in the domestic setting.<sup>290</sup> There, like Bruegel's, Bosch's art could be freely interpreted and Dirk Bax has offered some sinister connotations for Bosch's mills. On the right wing of Bosch's *St. Anthony* triptych (fig. 45), for example, two mills juxtapose a *calabash*, which deriving from Eastern architecture was synonymous in Bosch's day with evil and heresy.<sup>291</sup> Bax therefore proposed that these mills encouraged the viewer to consider the infiltration of malevolence into the Christian world, thus attributing less positive associations to the mill's distributive powers than Bennett identified in the "Windmill Psalter".<sup>292</sup> Such a reading is decorous iconographically in a picture showing the hermit Anthony's hallucinations in the desert. On top of the *calabash*, Bosch

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<sup>286</sup> This panel could not be dated by dendrochronology, but can be dated comfortably on stylistic grounds to around the time of Bosch's *Ship of Fools* (after 1485), which was made as part of a retable to which the "Rotterdam Tondo" also belonged (after 1487) (now fragmented), see Pinson, 77-78; Vermet, 88.

<sup>287</sup> A fragment of original barbe, visible to the naked eye, exists on the upper right corner of this panel on the side showing the *Carrying*, which demonstrates that the panel was initially narrow wing with an arched top. There have been several proposed reconstructions of the triptych, the first was offered by L. von Baldass, see, 'Ein Kreuzigungsalter von Hieronymus Bosch', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, (1935), 87-89.

<sup>288</sup> Three documented, now lost, altarpieces by Bosch are the *Creation of the World* (made for the main altar of St. John, 's-Hertogenbosch), the *Story of the Siege and Relief of Bethulia* (on the St. Michael altar in St. John's), and *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* (purchased for Bonn Cathedral in 1585), see Marijnissen (1987), 270. Bosch also painted regularly for the Brotherhood of Our Lady, to which he belonged. In the late 1480s Bosch provided small painted shutters for Adrian van Wesel's carved altarpiece inside the Brotherhood's Chapel dedicated to the Virgin at St. John's, which the Brotherhood had commissioned van Wesel to carve in 1466 and had been delivered in '77. Bosch painted his *St. John the Baptist* and *St. John on Patmos* on these shutters, see this, see C. M. Richardson, K. W. Woods, M. W. Franklin, *Renaissance Art Reconsidered. An Anthology of Primary Sources*, Oxford, 2007, 74-78; B. Vermet, 'Hieronymus Bosch: painter, workshop or style?', in Koldeweij, Vandenbroeck and Vermet, 84-100.

<sup>289</sup> Even Bosch's monumental *Garden of Earthly Delights* was made for a private patron rather than religious institution and was probably commissioned around 1481 by Engelbrecht II of Nassau. The association between the triptych and the Nassau was established by Gombrich, who demonstrated that the triptych was seen in the Nassau Palace at Brussels in 1517 by Antonio de Beatis, see Gombrich, 'The Earliest Description of Bosch's Garden of Delight', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXX (1967), 403-6. At that time, the triptych was owned by Hendrick III of Nassau, who had inherited property from his uncle Engelbrecht upon his death in 1504. Since Gombrich's article, scholars have regularly assumed that Hendrick was the triptych's original patron, thus giving credence to the favoured date of the *Garden* to post 1500. However, comparison between the *Garden* and other works by Bosch that must post-date 1500 (such as the *Haywain*, see above n.285) throws doubt on the *Garden's* mature dating. Engelbrecht in fact had the opportunity to commission the triptych from Bosch in 1481 when he visited 's-Hertogenbosch, Bosch's lifelong home, to attend the fourteenth chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece that was convened that year at the Church of S. John's, see C. A. J. Armstrong, 'The Burgundian Netherlands, 1477 - 1521', *The New Cambridge Modern History: I The Renaissance* (1957), 245-6; H. J. van Miegroet, 'Gerard David's "Justice of Cambyse": exemplum iustitiae or Political Allegory', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XVIII (1988), 133; P. Bietenholz and T. Deutscher, *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, Toronto and London, 1995, 4.

<sup>290</sup> On Bosch's innovative uses of the triptych format, see L. F. Jacobs, 'The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXXI (Winter, 2000), 1009-41.

<sup>291</sup> D. Bax, *Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture-Writing Deciphered*, N. A. Bax-Botha (trans.), Rotterdam, 1979, 158-9.

<sup>292</sup> See above n.258.

painted a *putgalg* (lever-system used to draw water from a well) and significantly Bruegel also paired these motifs in his *Gula (Gluttony)* (1558) (fig. 48).<sup>293</sup> Here the *putgalg* flanks a wide-mouthed face that Bruegel has morphed into a windmill, and this combination of mill and *putgalg* apparently signified foolish keenness for drink and gluttonous guzzling, which the engraving's inscription admonishes us to avoid: 'Shun drunkenness and gluttony, for excess makes man forget God and himself'.<sup>294</sup> Keenness is connoted by the *putgalg* while foolhardiness is signified by the mill-face, since the word for mill, *molen*, also meant stupidity in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century vernacular.<sup>295</sup> Bruegel's anthropomorphised face thus represents greed and stupidity embodied, which is enforced by the owl on top of the mill-face that generally symbolised folly.<sup>296</sup>

Contemporary sayings and proverbs confirm that links did exist between mills and folly. To 'be dusted over by the mill',<sup>297</sup> meant behaving in a silly, affected manner; 'to have caught a blow/slap/touch of the mill',<sup>298</sup> meant to be crack-brained; 'the mill is/goes/stands past the check',<sup>299</sup> meaning that the mill had slipped its break, meant to have a 'screw loose'; while to have 'been to the mill',<sup>300</sup> meant something like "he belongs with the insane".<sup>301</sup> The latter featured in Johannes Sartorius's 1561 proverb collection titled *Adagia a Joanne Sartorio*,<sup>302</sup> which was well known in Bruegel's circle<sup>303</sup> and was apparently consulted by Bruegel elsewhere.<sup>304</sup> In the secular environment, such sayings and proverbs likely came to bear on a viewer's interpretation of a mill in art and may have enabled Bruegel's audience to have forged a link between his windmill and the folly of humanity assailing Christ beneath it in the *Carrying*.

Bosch's boy with the whirligig, however, is particularly relevant in connection with Bruegel's windmill because this figure appears on the reverse of one of Bosch's own versions of

<sup>293</sup> Bruegel's drawing was signed and dated 1557, was engraved by Pieter van der Heyden and published by Cock in 1558, see Orenstein nos. 44 and 45, pp. 144-49. Bruegel could well have known Bosch's *St. Anthony* triptych, since there are at least 20 old copies of Bosch's original still extant, see Marijnissen, (1987), 154; G. Unverfehrt, *Hieronymus Bosch, Studien zu seiner Rezeption im 16. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1980, 19, 272-3, 286-7. Bosch's original, moreover, was probably in Antwerp until 1548 in the possession of Damião de Gois, see E. Hirsch, *Damião de Góis: The Life and Thought of a Portuguese Humanist 1502-1574*, The Hague, 1967, 46, 48; J. E. Carney, *Renaissance and Reformation, 1500-1620: a biographical dictionary*, Westport, 2001, 166.

<sup>294</sup> Orenstein, 148-9.

<sup>295</sup> Bax, 158-9.

<sup>296</sup> On the owl, see P. Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch: Tusse*, Bochum, 1987, 75; idem, 'Bubo Significans: Die Eule als Sinnbild von Schlechtigkeit und Torheit, vor allem in der niederländischen und deutschen Bildendarstellung und bei Jheronimus Bosch I', *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, (1985), 19-135.

<sup>297</sup> 'van den molen bestoven zijn', from Bax, 159.

<sup>298</sup> 'een slag/klap/tik van de molenweg hebben', from Bax, 159.

<sup>299</sup> 'de molen is/loopt/staat door de vang', from Bax, 159.

<sup>300</sup> 'hy heft ter moolen geweest', from Bax, 159.

<sup>301</sup> 'hy heeft ter moolen geweest', from Bax, 159.

<sup>302</sup> J. Sartorius, *Adagia a Joanne Sartorio in Batavicum sermonem proprie ac eleganter conversa*, Antwerp, 1561.

<sup>303</sup> Scholars and humanists such as Ortelius often compiled collections of portraits and gifted them to one another. Significantly, Sambucus's portrait was included in a set made by Philips Galle in 1567 (Galle was Ortelius's friend who had been responsible for engraving Bruegel's *Death of the Virgin* that Ortelius owned, see above n.39, n.119), see M. Sellink, *Philips Galle 1537-1612. Engraver and Print Publisher in Haarlem and Antwerp*, Amsterdam, 1997, I, 47.

<sup>304</sup> Bax, 159; Meadow, 35, 159<sup>36</sup>; Sullivan (Sep., 1991), 440<sup>107</sup>, 452<sup>168</sup>, 454ff.

the *Carrying of the Cross*. The whirligig boy has been called Bosch's most 'enigmatic' and debate about its significance abounds.<sup>305</sup> Several scholars have argued that the image represents Christ taking his first tentative steps—hence the frame<sup>306</sup>—on the road to his Passion, which is shown on the front of the panel.<sup>307</sup> According to this interpretation, the whirligig is an attribute of Christ's humility, which is consonant with the mill's Eucharistic associations.<sup>308</sup> The whirligig, however, also had pejorative associations. Carl Linfert interpreted the whirligig boy as an allegory of 'senselessness'<sup>309</sup> and Bax has shown that the whirligig was a common attribute for fools in contemporary *rederijker* drama.<sup>310</sup> Bax therefore proposed that Bosch's boy allegorised the foolish ignorant who fail to comprehend the gravity of Christ's Passion.<sup>311</sup> Bosch used the whirligig to this effect when he painted another child holding one on the back of the right wing of the *St. Anthony* triptych, who complacently observes Christ falling under the cross (fig. 49). To support this hypothesis, I would like to enter as evidence Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, which was first published in 1593<sup>312</sup> and reissued with illustrations in 1603.<sup>313</sup> In the *Iconologia*, the personification of 'Folly' holds a whirligig (fig. 50) and the accompanying text reads: '[Folly] riding upon a hobby horse; holding, in one hand, a Whirligig of Past-board; and plays the fool with Children, who make him twirl it by the wind'.<sup>314</sup> Since Ripa depended on older sources when compiling the *Iconologia*,<sup>315</sup> we can be fairly certain that such associations between whirligigs and folly were alive in Bosch's time and endured throughout the 1500s.

Bosch therefore used the whirligig and its associations to folly to full effect when he painted it on the reverse of his *Carrying* and by doing so, I believe that Bosch connected mills and folly with "spiritual blindness". When the triptych was closed, the reverse of the wing

<sup>305</sup> By W. Gibson, 'Bosch's Boy with a whirligig: some iconographic speculations', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, VIII (1975 - 1976), 9.

<sup>306</sup> Gibson observed how Christ is shown elsewhere in fifteenth-century art using a walking frame, where it probably signifies Christ's humility and humanity, see Gibson (1975 - 1976), 11.

<sup>307</sup> De Tolnay, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Baden-Baden, 1966, 27; W. Dobrowolski, 'Jesus with a 'sustentaculum'', *Ars auro priori* (1981), 201-08.

<sup>308</sup> Gibson (1975 - 1976), 9-15.

<sup>309</sup> C. Linfert, *Jheronimus Bosch*, Cologne, 1970, 13-15.

<sup>310</sup> A comedy, contemporary to Bosch titled *De Gewaande Weuenaar met het Bedroge Kermiskind* includes the following quote: 'The wine is stronger than I thought, it might well make my head giddy and cause me to run with the toy-mill' ('*Die wijn is sterker dan ich dacht, die zou my de kap wel dol maaken, en met't Molentje doen loopen*'). To run with the whirligig therefore signified folly, stupidity and errant behaviour, see Bax, 145-6.

<sup>311</sup> Bax, 145-6.

<sup>312</sup> C. Ripa, *Iconologia overo Descrittione dell'Imagini universali cavate dall'antichità et da altri luoghi da Cesare Ripa Perugino. Opera non meno utile, che necessaria a Poeti, Pittori & Scultori, per rappresentare le virtù, vitij, affetti, & passioni humane*, Rome, 1603. See also M. Praz: *Studies in Seventeenth-century Imagery. Studies of the Warburg Institute*, 2 vols, London, 1939-47, rev. Rome, 1964.

<sup>313</sup> The attribution of the woodcuts is a vexed issue. Convention gave them to Giuseppe Cesare, see E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux après le concile de Trente*, Paris 1932, 387<sup>1</sup>; E. Mandowsky, *Ricerche intorno all'iconologia de Cesare Ripa*, Florence, 1939, 8<sup>13</sup>. More recently, however, Stefano Pierguidi has more convincingly attributed the woodcuts to Giovanni Guerra (1544-1618), see Pierguidi, 'Giovanni Guerra and the Illustrations to Ripa's *Iconologia*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LXI (1998), 158-75.

<sup>314</sup> Ripa, 'Folly', in P. Tempest (ed.), *Iconologia, or Moral Emblems by Cesare Ripa*, London, 1709, 59.

<sup>315</sup> Panofsky and F. Saxl, 'A Late Antique Religious Symbol in Works by Holbein and Titian', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, XLIX (Oct., 1926), 179<sup>13</sup>.

showing the whirligig boy confronted the viewer as a personification of the foolish, whose “blindness” to the significances of Christ’s sacrifice is articulated by both the whirligig and his physical separation from the depiction of Christ carrying the cross on the opposite side of the wing. It is as if, by being painted on the reverse, this foolish youth has turned his back on Christ. The present panel was originally the left wing of a triptych, which, when opened, showed Christ walking towards what was probably a Crucifixion on the central panel and a Lamentation on the right wing.<sup>316</sup> Opening the triptych was therefore analogous to a revelation, during which the spiritual bankruptcy of the whirligig boy on the exterior is emphasised to the venerating viewer whose own eyes had been “opened” to the significances of Christ’s Passion that is shown to them when the triptych was opened.<sup>317</sup>

The resultant figurative dichotomy between seeing and blind folly, derived from hermeneutical engagement with Bosch’s triptych, is also, I believe, in operation in Bruegel’s *Carrying*. All the surviving pictorial and proverbial material relating to mills likely enabled Bruegel’s original audience to hypothesise about the meaning(s) of the windmill, some of whom may have interpreted the mill as a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice and the redemption.<sup>318</sup> Others, however, might have drawn a link between the windmill and the blind folly of Christ’s tormentors. Indeed, the rhetorician Jan van den Berghe used the windmill in *Het Leenhof der Gilden* to symbolise the faithless and fickle who disregard moral constancy and turn, like the mill’s sails, with every wind.<sup>319</sup> Significantly, van den Berghe’s play was published in 1564—the same year as Bruegel’s picture—and his description of the faithless, turning with every wind evokes the mob that besieges Christ beneath the windmill, some of whom smote Him while others travel in the opposite direction, continuing with their mundane activities ignorant to the events unfolding (figs. 15, 51). Moreover, the peculiarly Dutch term *siendenblind*, meaning a seeing person who nevertheless behaves in a spiritually blind manner, features regularly in sixteenth-century dictionaries and references to the spiritually blind occur in contemporary

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<sup>316</sup> Baldass (1935), 87-9 offered this reconstruction, whereas de Tolnay (1966) argued for an entombment. I would like to suggest that a Resurrection of Christ is also plausible.

<sup>317</sup> Should the right wing have also survived from this triptych then we might be able to make this argument more forcefully. Marijnissen, speculating about the reverse of the right wing, wrote the following:

‘If it is hypothesised that Bosch depicted the Christ Child on the left wing, one tends to seek its counterpart in the directions indicated by Gibson and Dobrowolski, which inevitably leads us to religious woodcuts, the illustration of books and exempla. The Holy Virgin teaching the Christ Child to walk? This hypothesis is unlikely in view of the limited space of the roundel. Nor does the charm of this sort of pious genre scene really suit Bosch. A Saint John the Baptist perhaps? A childish parody of the tournament such as that illustrated by Israhel van Meckenem would fit the available space extremely well...’

See Marijnissen, 273. In reality, the left wing is so original in iconography that it is impossible to surmise what Bosch might have painted on the right, although a parody of the tournament would be consonant with the identification of the whirligig boy as a representation of the foolhardy and ignorant.

<sup>318</sup> As Sellink, 192 and Pierce, 48-55, 92, concluded.

<sup>319</sup> J. van den Berghe, *Dichten en spelen van Jan van den Berghe*, 1564, C. Kruyskamp (ed.), The Hague, 1950, 25. *Het Leenhof der Gilden* was published posthumously after van den Berghe’s death in 1559, see G. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515 – 1556*, Toronto, 2000, 305<sup>23</sup>.

drama.<sup>320</sup> In Adriaen Jacobsz's 1552 play titled *De Ghepredestineerde Blinde* (*The Predestined Blind Man*), for example, the *siendenblind* is represented as the allegorical *Voorgaende menichte* (the hurrying crowd) which advances indiscriminately in its blindness.<sup>321</sup> Again, this theatrical evocation of blind folly brings to mind Bruegel's hurrying crowd, eagerly pursuing Christ to the site of His execution.

The windmill, however, had still more particular associations in the 1560s: to fortune. As far as I am aware, it has never before been mentioned that a windmill features in Sambucus's *Emblemata*, published, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, in 1564 by Plantin—the very year that Bruegel painted the *Carrying*.<sup>322</sup> Underneath the heading 'Laziness waits on Fortune', Sambucus showed a windmill alongside which a woman reposes (fig. 52).<sup>323</sup> The *subscriptio* reads:

The parents built the windmill on a small hill, so that the wind should move it, and the millstones grind the grain, that art with all necessary help should protect and advance life, and long hunger need not oppress the imprudent. But reasoning is better when a perpetual stream seeks it, so that, when the wind dies, the wheel should not stand inactive. Windmills are like the reckless good-for-nothings who love laziness, and lack intelligence as they wait for the hand of fate.<sup>324</sup>

Here, the changeability of the windmill's movement, depending as it does on irregular natural phenomena, is used to critique the foolish who recklessly leave their fate to chance. Given the proverbial, theatrical and artistic links between mills and folly enumerated above, it is unsurprising that Sambucus used the mill to forge this association pictorially. But by doing so, he also updated the iconography of the Wheel of Fortune. A concept of Greek origin<sup>325</sup> and common in medieval art (fig. 53), the wheel turned by fortune gave cogent visual expression to vacillating morals and fickleness over which fortune presides, thus attributing a cyclical uncertainty to life during which some will rise while others will fall off the wheel.<sup>326</sup> As Eric Ziolkowski suggested, it is unsurprising that windmills with their giant sails that move when the

<sup>320</sup> M. Weemans, 'Herri met de Bles's Way to Calvary: A Silenic Landscape', *Art History*, XXXII (Apr., 2009), 307-31.

<sup>321</sup> A. Jacobsz, *De Ghepredestineerde Blinde*, c. 1552, Brussels, Bibliotheque royale Albert 1er, inv. 21653.

<sup>322</sup> The 1564 version was released in Latin by Plantin, was extended with 56 new emblems two years later and Plantin also published it in Dutch translation that year with the assistance of Marcus Antonius Gillis van Diest, see Voet, V, 2168.

<sup>323</sup> 'Otium sortem expectat', Buck, fol. G6r.

<sup>324</sup> The original Latin reads:

COLLE molendinum parvo statuere parentes,  
Ventus ut exagitet, farra terantque molae.  
Omnibus ut vitam auxiliis ars protegat, ornetque,  
Opprimat incautos ne diuturna fames.  
Ast ratio melior quàm suppetit unda perennis,  
Flabraque dum desunt ne rota cesset iners.  
Ventisona ignavis similes, quibus otia cordi,  
Dum sortem sperant, ingenioque vacant.

Translated by author from Buck, fol. G6r.

<sup>325</sup> D. M. Robinson, 'The Wheel of Fortune', *Classical Philology*, XXXXI (Oct. 1946), 207-16.

<sup>326</sup> F. P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages*, London, 1970, 169-91.



wind happens to blow, came to be associated with fortune, and a windmill was indeed used to signify fortune in a fourteenth-century manual on Biblical commandments, virtues and vices.<sup>327</sup>

Links between fortune and windmills therefore predated, and remained current during, Bruegel's lifetime, and the concept of fortune itself was popular in Bruegel's milieu chiefly because of Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae* (524).<sup>328</sup> Christian exegetes had often denied the existence of fortune since being beyond God's purview it violated Divine providence and omnipotence.<sup>329</sup> Boethius, however, reconciled fortune with Christianity to imply the Christian choice to place trust in God and abide by scripture, or to live felicitously awaiting the hand of fate.<sup>330</sup> Significantly, Boethius was widely circulated in the vernacular in the Low Countries: a Dutch translation is known from the 1200s and two complete vernacular translations were published in 1466 and 1485.<sup>331</sup> The later of these, published by Arend de Keyser in Ghent and known as the *Ghent Boethius*, was circulated in an impressive incunabulum and was widely copied.<sup>332</sup> Significantly, among its copyists was Coornhert, affiliate of both Ortelius and Plantin, who translated the *Ghent Boethius* twice, first in 1557.<sup>333</sup> Furthermore, excerpts from the *Ghent Boethius* were available in Antwerp in a handy, portable book known as the *Antwerp Boethius excerpts*, which was designed to provide instant moral guidance and featured mostly content from Books I and II of Boethius's *consolacione*, where his discussion of fortune are to be found.<sup>334</sup>

The concept of fortune was therefore current in Bruegel's milieu and explicit associations between fortune and windmills seem to have existed from at least the fourteenth century.<sup>335</sup> Perhaps a sixteenth-century individual aware of this, familiar with Boethius, and attentive to popular *rederijker* themes including *siendenblind* and *Voorgaende menichte*, would combine all of these possible referents and identify humanity below Bruegel's windmill as a representation of the spiritually blind, hurrying indiscriminately and under the influence of fortune, to behold Christ's execution. It is worth noting here that Bruegel and many of his associates all belonged to the same guild as the *Violierin rederijkers*, and van Mander even

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<sup>327</sup> E. J. Ziolkowski, 'Don Quijote's Windmill and Fortune's Wheel', *The Modern Language Review*, LXXXVI (Oct., 1991), 885-97.

<sup>328</sup> Gibson also discussed Boethius in relation to Bruegel, see Gibson, 'Asinus ad lyram: from Boethius to Bruegel and beyond', *Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the History of Art*, XXXIII (2007/2008), 33-42.

<sup>329</sup> St. Augustine for instance denied the existence of fortune in *De civitate dei*, book IV, Ch. I8, and book V, Ch. 1, where he argues that the greatness of the Roman Empire is neither fortuitous (fortuita) nor fatal (fatalis), but rather, the necessary result of the order of divine providence.

<sup>330</sup> H. R. Patch, 'Fortune's Wheel and Boethius', *Modern Language Notes*, XXIX (Jun., 1914), 197; Ziolkowski, 885-97.

<sup>331</sup> M. Goris and W. Wissink, 'The Medieval Dutch Tradition of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*', in J. F. M. Hoenen and L. Nauta (eds.), *Boethius in the Middle Ages. Latin and Vernacular Translations of the Consolatio philosophiae*, Leiden, New York, Köln and Brill, 1997, 121ff.

<sup>332</sup> Goris and Wissink, 121-23.

<sup>333</sup> Goris and Wissink, 156.

<sup>334</sup> Goris and Wissink, 156-64; G. M. Cropp, 'The Medieval French Tradition', in Hoenen and Nauta, 252.

<sup>335</sup> Ziolkowski, 886.

claimed that Bruegel was actually friends with Hans Franckaert, who was indeed a *rederijker* at the *Violieren*.<sup>336</sup>

Moreover, given the foregoing interpretation of Bruegel's windmill and the crowd beneath it, fortune was herself often described as being blind in Antiquity.<sup>337</sup> In the second century BC, Pacuvius described Fortune thus:

Philosophers say that Fortune is insane and blind and stupid,  
and they teach that she stands on a rolling, spherical rock:  
they affirm that, wherever chance pushes that rock, Fortuna falls in that direction.  
They repeat that she is blind for this reason: that she does not see where she's heading;  
they say she's insane, because she is cruel, flaky and unstable;  
stupid, because she can't distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy.<sup>338</sup>

This description of fortune on a spherical rock brings to mind Bruegel's weathered massif, the flaky and unstable appearance of which evokes Pacuvius's description of blinded fortune. Blind fortune belongs to a group of allegorically handicapped figures from Antiquity including Cupid, whose blindness connoted sinfulness, senselessness and folly which, crucially, could ensnare others: 'They were blind', wrote Panofsky, 'not only as personifications of an unenlightened state of mind... but also as personifications of an active force behaving like an eyeless person: they would hit and miss at random...' <sup>339</sup> Fortune's own blindness is therefore a contagion, and I would argue that this is exactly the kind of association that erudite individuals viewing Bruegel's carrying would have forged between the windmill and the *siendenblind* below. Pacuvius's description of fortune was indeed familiar in the sixteenth century.<sup>340</sup>

I would therefore suggest that Bruegel's windmill is a much more complex motif than has hitherto been acknowledged. While the mill may have reminded some viewers about the Eucharist and redemption, the mill's sinister associations cannot be overlooked. In the secular environment, individuals would have enjoyed scope to discuss the mill, invoking their familiarity with literature, other art, emblems, proverbs and drama, which could have yielded connections between the windmill, fortune and the blinded (*siendenblind*) crowd below (*Voorgaende menichte*). The frenzied, profane *vulgus* are thus shown living under the dominion of fortune, unable to distinguish between the worthy and unworthy and leaving their fate to

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<sup>336</sup> Van Mander, fol.233r, in Miedema (1994), I, 193; Gibson (Sep., 1981), 431.

<sup>337</sup> Apuleius (c.125 – c.180) for example described fortune as 'eyeless' in the *Golden Ass*, 7:2.

<sup>338</sup> The original Latin reads:

*Fortunam insanam esse et caecam et brutam perhibent philosophi,  
Saxoque instare in globoso praedicant volubili:  
Id quo saxum inpulerit fors, eo cadere Fortunam autumant.  
Caecam ob eam rem esse iterant, quia nihil cernat, quo sese adplicet;  
Insanam autem esse aiunt, quia atrox, incerta instabilisque sit;  
Brutam, quia dignum atque indignum nequeat internoscere.*

Translation by author. Latin quoted from Pacuvius, *Scaenicae Romanorum Poesis Fragmenta*, O. Ribbeck (ed.), Toronto, 1897, I, 144.

<sup>339</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York, 1972, 112.

<sup>340</sup> Pacuvius was familiar to Shakespeare and Erasmus, see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's 'Small Latine & Lesse Greeke'*, Illinois, 1944, II, 74; Erasmus (1997), XXIII, 317.

chance. If the windmill did indeed signify fortune, then Bruegel also showed the requisite falling off the wheel. If we follow the arc of the procession as it revolves around the rock and beyond Golgotha, then we glimpse on the horizon gallows and wheels, which demonstrate the inevitable conclusion of such imprudent living: death. Death is of course unavoidable for the pious and foolish alike, but the gallows in Bruegel's day tended to connote folly and deceit duly punished—a popular saying at the time was to 'grow up for gallows and wheel', meaning to live a dissolute life that would end on the gallows after which your body would be left to hang on the wheel as carrion.<sup>341</sup> The moral implication of this for Bruegel's viewers was, of course, to not live under fortune's dominion. Analogous to the moral significance provided when Bosch's triptych showing the whirligig boy was opened, Bruegel's picture likewise encouraged the viewer to "open their eyes" and recognise, from their privileged position as the "seeing", mankind's fickleness and to conversely exercise providence. To ensure such a response, Bruegel provided a positive to the negative: the pious group.

#### THE PIOUS GROUP

At the extreme foreground of the *Carrying* Bruegel placed a pale, swooning Mary who is supported by John the Evangelist and three other female mourners (fig. 35). The old-fashioned style of this group has been consistently recognised,<sup>342</sup> and Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition* (c.1430) is usually, and rightly, given as Bruegel's most obvious source (fig. 54).<sup>343</sup> Whether Bruegel actually saw Rogier's *Deposition* is moot, since it is uncertain when exactly this altarpiece left the Netherlands for Spain, where it is documented in 1564.<sup>344</sup> He could, however, have seen a copy—two existed in public locations at Louvain<sup>345</sup>—and there was no shortage of paintings and graphic works featuring Weydenesque motifs.

The inclusion of Mary and her retinue in a carrying of the cross is not itself new in Bruegel's picture. What is novel, however, is their old-fashioned style, their prominence and the intensity of their emotions. Foregrounded, closely knit and exhibiting extreme grief, iconographically the group would be more at home in a fifteenth-century *Crucifixion*, *Deposition*, *Lamentation* or *Pietà* (figs. 55-58). It would appear that Bruegel intended for such iconographic

<sup>341</sup> 'voor galg en rad', Bax, 275.

<sup>342</sup> For example, Friedländer (as in n.11), 25; Grossmann (1973), 196.

<sup>343</sup> By, for example, Sellink, 192.

<sup>344</sup> It was documented as having been in Phillip II's possession and displayed at the Escorial in 1564. Phillip had either inherited the painting in 1558, when its owner, his aunt Mary of Hungary died, or perhaps he purchased it from her before her death. Mary herself had purchased it in 1548 from the Guild of the Crossbowmen at Louvain, who originally commissioned Rogier to paint the altarpiece for their chapel in the *Onze Lieve Vrouw van ginderbuiten* around 1430. Mary installed the picture in the chapel in her château at Binche, south of Brussels. On the provenance of Rogier's retable, see L. Campbell, *Van der Weyden*, London, 2004, 9ff; Panofsky (1971), I, 257.

<sup>345</sup> A copy, dated 1443, was commissioned by William Edelheer and installed in St. Peter's Church at Louvain. The "Edelheer Triptych" is still in situ. Another was commissioned by Mary, who was obliged, according to the conditions of sale imposed by the Guild of the Crossbowmen, to furnish their chapel with a replacement copy of Rogier's altarpiece. This copy was provided by Michiel Coxie (lost or untraced), see Panofsky (1971), 257; A. Powell, 'The Errant Image: Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition* from the Cross and its Copies', *Art History*, XXIX (2006), 546-49.

similarities to be recognised by the viewer, since on the ground in front of Mary is a space that could feasibly, we imagine, accommodate Christ's lifeless body. He also included in the foreground several motifs conventionally found in a *Crucifixion*.<sup>346</sup> These include a human skull, probably Adam's, whose sin Christ redeemed and another bone nearby might refer to the instrument used by Cain to kill Abel, which sometimes features on fifteenth-century triptychs showing the *Crucifixion* as an Old Testament prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice (fig. 59).<sup>347</sup> For the pious group, therefore, Bruegel transferred the iconography of pictures showing events *following* the carrying of the cross and presented them at the foreground in an entirely primitive style. Although to modern eyes all the figures in Bruegel's *Carrying* look antiquated by virtue of the picture's age, to its original viewers the stylistic and iconographic disjunction provided by the pious group must have been jarring.<sup>348</sup> We should therefore ask why Bruegel made such a conspicuous iconographic transferral, both in terms of style and subject, for his mourning group in the *Carrying*.

#### IMITATIO AND ÆMULATEO

Mark Meadow has considered Bruegel's reuse of older models in his art according to contemporary rhetorical discourse about *imitatio* and *æmulateo*.<sup>349</sup> In contemporary literary criticism, *æmulateo* constituted the culmination of an author's processes of imitation (*imitatio*), by which the author, having translated, copied and reworked pre-existing models is ultimately able to outdo his or her forebears (*æmulateo*).<sup>350</sup> Such literary criticism clearly influenced visual criticism, since it is according to the concept of *æmulateo* that Lampsonius understood Bruegel's filiation with Bosch, writing that Bruegel 'surpasses' the older painter.<sup>351</sup> It is therefore likely that this is one way in which Bruegel's original audience understood the anachronistic foreground group in the *Carrying* and they, as we do, would surely recognise their derivation from older art including Rogier's, and would consequently acknowledge Bruegel's imitative virtuosity.<sup>352</sup> I would like to suggest, however, that Bruegel's motives were also religious and that by emulating older art Bruegel wanted to elicit a particular spiritual response from the viewer.

<sup>346</sup> Noted by Pierce, 48-49.

<sup>347</sup> For example, see I. M. Veldm, 'The Old Testament as a moral code: Old Testament stories as exempla of the ten commandments', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXIII (1995), 215-39; Pierce, 48-49.

<sup>348</sup> M. Meadow, 'Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*, Æmulation and the Space of Vernacular Style', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXXVII (1996), 180-205.

<sup>349</sup> Meadow (2002), 104ff; Meadow (1996).

<sup>350</sup> Meadow (1996), 191; G. W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXX (1980), 1-32; J. D. P. Warners, 'Translatio – Imitatio – Æmulatio', *De Nieuwe Taalgids*, LXIX (1956), 289-95.

<sup>351</sup> Lampsonius, as in n.1; Meadow (1996), 191.

<sup>352</sup> Meadow (1996), 190-205.

## SPIRITUAL EXEMPLARS AND PIOUS PAINTING

The idea to include a pious group so prominently in a *Carrying* as a foil to the blind folly of mankind probably came to Bruegel from Erasmus. In his *Paraphrase on Psalm 2* (1524) Erasmus described the blind mockery of the mob surrounding Christ, who is described as being an insignificant and invisible 'worm' on the way to Calvary.<sup>353</sup> And in the earlier *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum* (1521-23),<sup>354</sup> Erasmus had elaborated this theme by describing the contrast between the frenzied blind crowd assailing Christ and a group of female mourners, whose distant gazes were characterized by faith, compassion and tears.<sup>355</sup> I have already suggested that Bruegel's windmill would have encouraged original viewers to recognise the blindness of the crowd that surrounds Christ, and so like Erasmus's female mourners, Bruegel's prominent pious group must also have been conceived and understood as spiritual exemplars, displaying a paradigmatic and antithetical emotional response to Christ's Passion than that exhibited by His recognisably modern tormentors.

This literary justification for Bruegel's group is also supported by a visual tradition for placing the Virgin, John and other saints at the extreme foreground of compositions that flourished in fifteenth-century art and apparently stemmed from an invention by Rogier (figs. 60-62).<sup>356</sup> In these pictures, the foregrounded figures appeal to the viewer's empathy and provide exemplary responses to Christ's suffering that were likely intended to instruct and edify the devotee.<sup>357</sup> Believing that Bruegel's original audience would have recognised the Rogierian derivation of Bruegel's group,<sup>358</sup> the pious group in the *Carrying* therefore provided a site for contemplation as a foil to the sense of spiritual ambivalence represented in the picture's middle-ground. The iconography of the group, belonging to pictures showing the events following the carrying of the cross, further serves to exhort the viewer to mentally project beyond the story illustrated proper and to contemplate Christ's death for the redemption of mankind. Mary and her attendants, meanwhile, provide a paradigmatic emotional response to Christ's sacrifice that was surely intended to encourage the viewer's retrospection, self-reflection and contrition, in similar ways to the group's fifteenth-century predecessors.

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<sup>353</sup> Erasmus (1997), LXIII, 98-114.

<sup>354</sup> Erasmus, *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum*, 1521-23, see J. Payne, A. Rabil Jr and W. Smith, 'The Paraphrases of Erasmus: Origin and Character', in Erasmus (1997), XXXXII, 10-34.

<sup>355</sup> In Erasmus's 'Paraphrase of Mark', see Erasmus (1997), XLIX, 173 and the 'Paraphrase of Luke', see Erasmus (1997), XLVIII, 215.

<sup>356</sup> Ringbom, 117-141. On the matter of Rogier's invention, see G. Hulin de Loo, 'La vignette chez les enlumineurs gantois entre 1470 et 1500', *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts, Académie Royale de Belgique*, XXI (1939), 158ff; J. Destrée, 'Roger de la Pasture van der Weyden', Paris and Brussels, 1930, I, 131; Friedländer, II, 123; S. Reinach, 'A Lost Picture by Rogier van der Weyden', *Burlington Magazine*, XXXXIII (1923), 214-21. F. Winkler, however, rejects the attribution of this invention to Rogier, see Winkler, 'Das Berliner "Tüchlein" des Hugo van der Goes und sein Gegenstück', *Berliner Museen, N. F.*, 1955, 7ff.

<sup>357</sup> Ringbom, 114-41.

<sup>358</sup> As above n.348.

The old-fashioned style of the mourners contributed to this function as there is evidence to suggest that sixteenth-century viewers associated old-fashioned style in art with supreme spirituality. The legitimacy of images in religious devotion was a vexed issue in the 1500s that came to a head in Bruegel's day with the outbreak of the *Beeldenstorm* in 1566.<sup>359</sup> In the defence of images, iconophiles regularly cited Augustine, who avowed the ability of images to signify divine people and deeds and thus move the mind of the beholder.<sup>360</sup> Several iconophiles, however, also explicitly commended archaic style in art. In 1522, for example, Hieronymus Emser argued that simple images divested of the exuberances of the modern style (*maniera*) were permissible, since their simplicity and restraint was conducive to piety.<sup>361</sup> In 1551, Vincente Álvarez expressed a similar idea in relation to Rogier's *Deposition*, writing 'I have seen many fine paintings... but none that could match this one in verisimilitude and piety', and went on to draw an important distinction between Rogier's altarpiece and its copies, judging the latter 'almost as good... but not quite.'<sup>362</sup> Here Álvarez seems to connect piety with age, and piety with Rogier's art in particular. The currency of these ideas in Bruegel's milieu is suggested by Cock's publication of Rogier's *Deposition* as an engraving in 1565, just one year after Bruegel painted the *Carrying* (fig. 63).<sup>363</sup> It has been suggested that once Rogier's altarpiece left the Netherlands, individuals such as Cock became increasingly aware to ensure that a link was preserved between pious painting and the Netherlands, but with Rogier in particular and, more particularly still, with his *Deposition*.<sup>364</sup> Bruegel's Rogierian group may also have related to this endeavour.

The matter of religious art's legitimacy was also dealt with at the Council of Trent. Issued in 1563,<sup>365</sup> the Council's decrees sanctioned the use of images because:

...the faithful are instructed and strengthened... through the expression of faith in pictures... great benefits flow from all sacred images, not only because people are reminded of the gifts and blessings conferred onto us by Christ, but because the miracles of God through the saints and

<sup>359</sup> As above n.45; J. Winston, 'Describing the Virgin', *Art History*, XXV (June 2002), 275-92.

<sup>360</sup> Ringbom, 14-17.

<sup>361</sup> He made these comments in refutation of the Wittenberg iconoclast Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who absolutely rejected the justification of images in his treatise titled *Von Abtuhung der Bylder und das keyn Bedtler unter Christen seyn sollen* (*On the Removal of Images*), published in 1522. Emser systematically rebuffed Karlstadt's arguments in his treatise called *Das Man der heyiligen bilder in der Kirchen nit Abthon, noch unehren soll und das sie in der Schrifft nyndert verboten seyn* (*That One Should not Remove Images of the Saints from the Churches nor dishonour them and that they are not forbidden in Scripture*), which appeared just after Karlstadt's treatise in April 1522, see C. R. Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-Assessment*, Leuven, 2007, 6; B. D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi, *A Reformation Debate. Three Treatises in Translation*, Toronto, 1994, 21-97.

<sup>362</sup> V. Álvarez, *Relation du beau voyage que fit aux Pays-Bas, en 1548, le prince Philippe d'Espagne, notre seigneur*, 1551, M.T. Dovillé (trans.), Brussels, 1964, 95-6

<sup>363</sup> F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts 1400-1700*, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, 1997, V, 48-9. Cock's engraving was done by Cornelis Cort and is inscribed 'M. Rogerij Belgiae inuentum', which is apparently the earliest instance where the invention of the *Deposition* is expressly given to Rogier, see Powell, 52.

<sup>364</sup> Powell, 550-52.

<sup>365</sup> H. Schroeder (ed. and trans.), *Canons and decrees of the Council of Trent: original text with English translation*, London, 1941.

their salutary example is put before the eyes of the faithful, who can thank God for them, shape their own lives and conduct themselves in imitation of the saints...<sup>366</sup>

Plantin and Ortelius both associated, as I have mentioned, with the Catholic theologian Montanus who had advised at the Council of Trent. This might suggest that debates surrounding the legitimacy of art for devotion were indeed current in Bruegel's circle and that Bruegel's foreground group in the *Carrying* was also intended to intervene on these issues by encouraging his audience to consider and discuss the use of images for devotion. In any event, Bruegel's mourners do correspond with the Council's decree by placing salutary examples of faith before the eyes of the beholder. The decree, moreover, also singles-out a final concept of relevance to Bruegel's *Carrying*, that of imitation.

The notion of imitation developed in tandem with the *Devotio Moderna* and advanced its basic tenet of renewing the Christian faith by instilling into it a new moral veracity derived from a pragmatic and personal faith that prioritised unremitting contemplation of Christ's Passion.<sup>367</sup> Imitation was thus meant in a figurative sense, conceived to encourage the faithful to emulate Christ and the saint's examples. As the *Devotio Moderna's* founder Geert Groote wrote:

...do not proceed in the way of anxiety, sorrow, fear, labor and grief, of which the world is full [but live] in an abundance of things good and true, not false and transient and quickly corrupted... how great will be your glory and the place of your habitation, if through all this transience you cling permanently and persistently to your Lord! For he who stands firm to the end will be saved...<sup>368</sup>

According to Groote, the examples offered by the Divine give the faithful hope and consolation in contrast to the transience and corruptibility of humanity. Exactly this dichotomy is played-out in Bruegel's picture, whereby the pious group offer emotional and spiritual exemplum that contrasts the blinded crowd in its copious variety, some of whom go about doing their day-to-day activities in ignorance to the gravity of the events taking place.

Imitation, derived from Groote, did indeed remain influential throughout the 1500s, having been expounded by Erasmus and others.<sup>369</sup> Moreover, Thomas à Kempis's hugely influential treatise *De Imitatione Christi* (c.1430),<sup>370</sup> was widely published before and during Bruegel's lifetime: at least 639 editions in Latin and the vernacular appeared from Antwerp

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<sup>366</sup> L. P. Wandel, 'The Reformation and the visual arts', *The Cambridge Journal of History VI: Reform and Expansion 1500-1660*, (2007), 345-70.

<sup>367</sup> Engen, 7ff, 24-5, 36ff; U. Rublack, *Reformation Europe*, Cambridge, 2005, 1-9.

<sup>368</sup> Groote, *Letter 29*, quoted from Engen, 78.

<sup>369</sup> Erasmus was taught at the Brethren of the Common Life at 's-Hertogenbosch between 1483 and '86. The Brotherhood of the Common Life was a subsidiary of the *Devotio Moderna* that promoted many of its principles and beliefs, see Erasmus's autobiography, the *Compendium Vitae*, of 1524; E. Rummel, *The Erasmus Reader*, Toronto, 1990, 15ff. esp. 17; N. Rubinstein *et al.*, *The Age of the Renaissance*, D. Hay (trans.), London, 1967, 210ff; Engen, 12ff.

<sup>370</sup> Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi*, W. Benham (trans.), London, 2007. The authorship of the treatise is not certain, although Kempis does appear to be the strongest candidate, see W. Jappe Alberts, 'Zur Historiographie der *Devotio Moderna* und ihrer Erforschung', *Westfälische Forschungen*, XI (1958), 54; Engen, 8-9.

between 1500 and 1650 and the treatise was, in fact, second only to the Bible in terms of popularity.<sup>371</sup> In *De imitatione*, Kempis wrote:

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, said the Lord. These are the words of Christ; and they teach us how far we must imitate his life and character, if we seek true illumination, and deliverance from all blindness of heart. Let it be our most earnest study, therefore, to dwell upon the life of Christ.<sup>372</sup>

Kempis's description of Christ and His example delivering man from 'blindness of heart' lends itself well to Bruegel's picture, which likewise shows a blinded humanity pushing Christ irreverently to Golgotha. The pious group, solemnly mourning Christ's Passion, thus serve to implore the viewer's contemplation of Christ, whose example offers in Kempis's words 'true illumination'. Kempis also influenced the Christocentric spirituality of Casper Schwenkfeld (1489-1561), whose translation of *De Imitatione* into German influenced Sebastianus Castellio (1515-63), whose Latin translation was published in Dutch in 1564 at Antwerp by Dirk Buyter, the same year that Bruegel painted the *Carrying*.<sup>373</sup> Both Castellio and Schwenkfeld promoted a vision of the Church that was unhindered by extrinsic manifestations of faith and both, like Erasmus, were primarily concerned with nurturing true piety, which was embodied in Christ and the saints who served as imitative models.<sup>374</sup> Therefore, given the obvious currency of imitation in Antwerp and the beliefs of Bruegel's associates and patrons that I outlined in Chapter 1, it is likely that Bruegel's original audience would have understood the pious group's anomalous appearance in his *Carrying* as models of faith, whose grief and empathy were intended to inspire and encourage the viewer's own reflection of Christ, His deeds and His sacrifice. Together with their archaic style, the group therefore served to remind the viewer of Christ's eternal triumph in deliberate contradistinction to the corrupted crowd shown behind.

## CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I have attempted to explore some of the ways in which Jongelinck and his friends may have understood Bruegel's *Carrying*. By paying close attention to contemporary drama, art and literature, I have argued that the windmill orchestrated the viewer's interpretation of the picture, encouraging them to identify meaningful juxtapositions between Christ's assailants and the foregrounded pious group, which centred on the notion of spiritual blindness. The windmill is an example of the extent to which Bruegel's imagery probably elicited multivalent interpretations. Depending on each viewer's respective familiarity with comparable literary,

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<sup>371</sup> M. von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425-1650: from late Medieval classic to Early Modern bestseller*, Farnham and Burlington, 2011, 9, 66, 115, 157, 211.

<sup>372</sup> Kempis (2007), 3.

<sup>373</sup> Von Habsburg, 115.

<sup>374</sup> E. J. Furcha, 'Key Concepts in Caspar von Schwenkfeld's thought: Regeneration and the New Life', *Church History*, XXXVII (Jun., 1968), 160-73; J. Wach, 'Caspar Schwenkfeld, a Pupil and a Teacher in the School of Christ', *The Journal of Religion*, XXVI (Jan., 1946), 1-29.



artistic, and theatrical material, some may have interpreted the windmill as a symbol of the Eucharist and the redemption, while others may have offered different readings, such as the windmill signifying fortune. During a discussion taking place in the home, however, original viewers may have concluded that the windmill's associations to fortune are most apposite, since this reading helps to elucidate the picture's overall imagery and its composition, especially in relation to the pious group. Set against a backdrop showing a blinded mob governed by fortune, the pious group therefore had several functions. Given their fifteenth-century derivation, they act as spiritual exemplars, set-up as paradigms to be imitated in contradistinction to the extreme irreverence witnessed behind them. The pious group, however, is also one of those instances where Bruegel's imagery apparently had topical significance, since their presence may have triggered conversation about the legitimacy of images for religious devotion and contemporary endeavours to assure links between pious painting and the Netherlands. In the domestic environment, Bruegel's original audience would have had the liberty to discuss all of these possible meanings, referents and significances, during a tolerant discussion of the like encountered in contemporary *convivium* literature. In the following Chapter I will further explore the currency of spiritual blindness in Bruegel's milieu in relation to a picture by Bruegel that deals so explicitly with blindness and its consequences, the *Blind Leading the Blind*.

## Chapter 3:

### THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Executed in distemper on canvas, Bruegel's *Blind Leading the Blind* (fig. 16) is an example of a type of painting often called *tüchlein*. *Tüchlein* are notoriously fragile and examples from 1400 to 1600 have seldom survived.<sup>375</sup> The *Blind*, however, is in fairly good condition save for some abraded parts that are discussed in this Chapter. Two other canvas paintings securely by Bruegel also survive: the *Misanthrope* (1568) and the *Wine of St. Martin's Day* (c.1566) (figs. 29, 64).<sup>376</sup> I have argued that Bruegel's *Blind* originally decorated a prominent sociable room inside the home of its owner, perhaps in suburban Brussels. Indeed, being a *tüchlein* perhaps made the *Blind* particularly suitable for domestic display, being lighter than panel, easier to hang etc.<sup>377</sup> And although the *Blind* is first positively documented in an Italian inventory, listed in 1612 as belonging to Count Giovan Masi of Parma,<sup>378</sup> its earlier provenance can be reconstructed and allays any suspicion that Bruegel originally painted this picture for an Italian client.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> The scarcity of extant *tüchlein* must have skewed our perception of what was probably a much more popular and widespread technique. Several other examples have survived by artists including Hugo van der Goes, Quentin Massys and Dieric Bouts, see Winkler (1955), 2-8; D. Bomford, A. Roy and A. Smith, 'The Techniques of Dieric Bouts: Two Paintings Contrasted', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, X (1986), 39-57; A. Roy, 'The Technique of a *Tüchlein* by Quentin Massys', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, XII (1988), 36-43.

<sup>376</sup> See Finaldi; Sellink and Maroto, 784-93. These three paintings probably represent only a fragment of Bruegel's original output using this media.

<sup>377</sup> *Tüchlein*s were not exclusively produced for the domestic interior. Dieric Bouts's *Entombment*, for example, which is a *tüchlein*, seems to have formed part of a larger retable that was originally installed in a family chapel, see Bomford, Roy and Smith (1986), 39-41. The iconography of the *Blind*, however, rules out such a devotional setting.

<sup>378</sup> See G. Bertini, *La quadreria farnesiana e i quadri confiscata nel 1612 ai feudatari parmensi*, Parma, 1977, 49-55; L. Fornari Schianchi and N. Spinosa (eds.), *I Farnese. Arte e Collezionismo*, Milan, 1995, 265. Giovan owned both the *Blind Leading the Blind* and the *Misanthrope*.

<sup>379</sup> In May 1612, Giovan's property was confiscated by Duke Ranuccio I Farnese for his part in a conspiracy against the Farnese. Among the sequestered property was Giovan's Bruegels, which are later documented at the Farnese's Palazzo del Giardino, see L. Turchi, 'Masi, Giovan Battista', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LXXI (2008); J. Fletcher, 'Venetian Seventeenth Century Painting at the National Gallery', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXI (Oct., 1979), 666; V. Denis, *All the Paintings of Pieter Bruegel*, New York, 1961, 39. How Giovan came into possession of the Bruegels is unknown, but their likely provenance is that he had inherited them from his father Cosimo, who was a keen art collector and connoisseur. In the early 1590s, Cosimo spent several years in the Netherlands and a series of letters sent by him from there to Alessandro Dell'Orsa and his employer Alessandro Farnese in Parma reveal his interests in acquiring Netherlandish paintings, see G. Bertini, 'Otto van Veen, Cosimo Masi and the Art Market in the Antwerp at the End of the Sixteenth Century', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXL (Feb., 1998), 119-20; J. R. Martin, *The Farnese Gallery*, Princeton, 1965, 9, 17. In one of these letters, Cosimo grumbled about the excessive prices charged for paintings at Antwerp, for which he blamed the Archduke Ernst, who had amassed a vast collection of Flemish art between 1594 and '95, see Bertini (1998), 119. By singling out Ernst, Cosimo's letter implies that he wanted to locate works by Bruegel (which were rare and expensive in the decades following the artist's death, see above n.37) since Ernst owned a number of Bruegels including Jongelinck's *Months*, which were given to him by Antwerp's authorities (see above n.157, n.158, n.159) and others, including the *Children's Games*, that Ernst had acquired from the dealer Hans van Wijk, see Currie and Allart, I, 57. This demonstrates that paintings by Bruegel did occasionally come onto the market in the 1590s, and since we know that Cosimo returned to Parma in 1595 with some Netherlandish paintings, it seems likely that it was at this time that Bruegel's *Blind* and *Misanthrope* found their way to Italy. Giovan would then have inherited them in 1600. The likely provenance of Bruegel's *Blind*, therefore, in no way gives rise to the suggestion that it was made for an Italian client and it was in all probability painted for a Netherlandish home, possibly, I have argued, in suburban Brussels, see also Bertini, 'Center and Periphery: Art Patronage in Renaissance Piacenza and Parma', in C. M. Rosenberg (ed.), *The Court Cities of Northern Italy. Milan, Parma, Piacenza, Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Urbino, Pesaro, and Rimini*, Cambridge, 2010, 116-7. Further support that Bruegel did not work directly for Italian patrons is provided by the provenance of the *Wine of St. Martin's day*, the third surviving *tüchlein* by Bruegel that is also first documented in Italy in the 1626 inventory of the Gonzaga family. This neither was made

*Siendenblind* (spiritual blindness) was a familiar concept in Bruegel's day and influenced, I have suggested, Bruegel's *Carrying*. In the *Blind*, however, deficiencies of sight and its consequences have become the manifest content. Usually, the *Blind* is given only cursory remarks in the literature and it is often said that Bruegel simply illustrated the Biblical proverb: 'if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch' (Matthew 15:14). However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the conditions in which Bruegel's paintings were originally displayed makes it unlikely that discussions about the *Blind* would have begun and ended with the identification of the picture's "scriptural source". A further level of meaning has been offered by several pathologists who have attempted to identify the specific ocular diseases represented.<sup>380</sup> Although there is probably some truth to this hypothesis, such readings presuppose both Bruegel's and his audience's specialist knowledge of ophthalmology, which we cannot presume was widespread in the 1500s. Therefore, the predominant intended associations of blindness must here have been figurative, connoting metaphorical deficiencies of sight. Several scholars have stated this as being the case<sup>381</sup> and it was indeed the figurative sense intended by Christ.

Proverbs were incredibly popular in Bruegel's day.<sup>382</sup> Erasmus had particularly championed their collection and usage, since their Antiquity and longevity testified to a kernel of moral truth contained in them.<sup>383</sup> In the preceding century, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) also praised proverbs, which offer 'noble and elegant principles for living'.<sup>384</sup> In this Chapter, I will be considering some of the didactic significances engendered by Bruegel's picture showing the proverb of the blind. As with the previous Chapter, the comparisons I make to other art, literature and drama constitutes the kind of material that the 'implied beholder' for Bruegel's paintings likely brought to their discussions. I will argue that once again Bruegel made use of deliberate juxtapositions in his picture to encourage the viewer to weave an edifying narrative hinging on sight, faith, and spiritual blindness, but here Bruegel also made use of iconographic subversion by parodying the iconography of the pilgrim.

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for Italian patrons and was acquired in Flanders by Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga during his 1608 sojourn, see A. Luzio, *La Galleria dei Gonzaga venduta all'Inghilterra nel 1627-1628*, Milan, 1913, 104; Sellink and Maroto, 785<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>380</sup> Z. A. Karcioğlu, 'Ocular Pathology in *The Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind* and Other Paintings by Pieter Bruegel', *Survey of Ophthalmology*, XXXVII (Jan. – Feb. 2002), 55-62. Karcioğlu's article belongs to a corpus of scholarship in which pathologists have dwelled on Bruegel's "realist mode" in his depictions of the diseased and disabled, for example see: J. Martin Charcot and P. Richer, *Les Difformes et les malades dans l'art*, Paris, 1889; Richer, *L'art et la médecine*, Paris, 1901; T. Torrihlon, 'La Pathologie chez Bruegel', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Faculté de Médecine de Paris, Paris, 1957.

<sup>381</sup> For example, Grossmann (1973), 203.

<sup>382</sup> Gibson, *Figures of speech: picturing proverbs in renaissance Netherlands*, London and Berkeley, 2010; K. C. Lindsay, 'Mystery in Bruegel's Proverbs', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XXXVIII (1996), 63-76; D. Kunzle, 'Bruegel's Proverb Painting and the World Upside Down', *The Art Bulletin*, LIX (Jun., 1977), 197-202<sup>1</sup>; A. Wesseling, 'Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in Erasmus' Adages, Colloquies, and Letters', *Renaissance Quarterly*, LV (Spring, 2002), 81-147; Sullivan (Sep., 1991).

<sup>383</sup> Wesseling, 81-89.

<sup>384</sup> Gibson (2010), Ch. 1; L. B. Alberti, *Dinner Pieces: A Translation of the Inercenales*, David Marsh (trans.), Binghampton, 1987, 154; Wesseling, 82.

## BLIND MEN IN BRUEGEL'S ART, OTHER ART AND SOCIETY

Blindness fascinated Bruegel. Several versions of the *Blind Leading the Blind* by him are described in old inventories, including Granvelle's<sup>385</sup> and the Gonzaga's, which lists a four-figure version that apparently influenced Domenico Fetti's versions of the subject (fig. 65).<sup>386</sup> A group of blind beggars feature in Bruegel's *Battle Between Carnival and Lent* (1559), and a trio of blind men appear in the far reaches of the *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559) (figs. 66, 67). There is also an engraved tondo (sometimes attributed to Jan or Hieronymus Wierix or Pieter van der Heyden<sup>387</sup>) showing two blind men leading each other, the source for which may have been a painting by Bruegel since there are several painted versions of this composition by Jan I and Pieter II (figs. 68, 69).<sup>388</sup> And although the parable of the blind was fairly rare in art, Bruegel's picture was not unprecedented. Van der Heyden engraved the subject twice, one of which acknowledges '*H. Bos inuentor*'<sup>389</sup> and the other '*Hans Bol inuentor*' (figs. 70, 71).<sup>390</sup> Frans Hogenberg (whose *Blue Cloak* (c.1558) certainly inspired Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs*<sup>391</sup>) showed two blind men falling into a ditch in *Al Hoy!* (1559) (fig. 72).<sup>392</sup> Cornelis Massys (fl.

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<sup>385</sup> This, however, is certainly not the picture in Naples here under discussion, which is dated 1568, since Granvelle must have acquired this picture ahead of his departure from the Netherlands in 1564, see Gibson (1977), 122; A. Wauters, 'Pierre Bruegel et Cardinal Granvelle', *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletins de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques de la classe des Beaux-Arts*, (1914), 87-90

<sup>386</sup> Fletcher, 666. Pamela Askew erroneously asserted that Fetti was inspired by Bruegel's *Blind* now in Naples, asserting that this picture 'was in the Gonzaga collection during Fetti's residence at the Mantuan court', see Askew, 'The Parable Paintings of Domenico Fetti', *The Art Bulletin*, XXXIII (Mar., 1961), 23, 36. Fetti was at the Mantuan court between 1613 and '23. Bruegel's picture now in Naples, however, was in the collection of the Farnese at that time, see above n.379. This suggests that the Gonzaga owned a different version of the *Blind* by Bruegel that is now lost.

<sup>387</sup> Henri Hymans cited a version of the composition that carried van der Heyden's signature, acknowledged Bruegel as inventor and was dated 1557, see Hymans, *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, XIV, col. 506, no. 51. This picture however is untraced. Hollstein reproduced another derivative image, which he attributed to Hieronymus Wiericx, see Hollstein (1997) III, 290. Van Bastelaer reproduced this image but gave it to Jan Wiericx or van der Heyden, see Bastelaer, no. 181, pp 240.

<sup>388</sup> Ertz, *Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568-1625): die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, Köln, 1984, 348-9; Ertz (1998-2000), 38.

<sup>389</sup> The engraving is reproduced in F. W. H. Hollstein (1997), III, 138; IX, 27; Hollstein, *The new Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450 - 1700. Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, Orenstein (comp.) and Sellink (ed.), Amsterdam, 2006, xxiv. A lost painting by Bosch as the engraving's model was proposed by P. Lafond, *Hieronymus Bosch. Son art, son influence, et ses disciples*, Brussels and Paris, 1914, illustrated 95; Ludwig von Baldass, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Vienna, 1943, 233.

<sup>390</sup> Hollstein (1997), IX, 27; van Bastelaer, 240<sup>217</sup>. In 1556 van der Heyden engraved Bruegel's *Temptation of St. Anthony* (1556), quickly followed-up by the *Big Fish Eat the Little Fish* and the *Ass at School* (both 1557), which marked the beginning of a prodigious partnership, see Orenstein, 45-7. It is therefore not unlikely that Bruegel knew van der Heyden's engravings showing the *Blind Leading the Blind*.

<sup>391</sup> Meadow (2002), 99-101

<sup>392</sup> Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450-1700. Remigius and Frans Hogenberg*, U. Mielke (comp.) and G. Luijten (ed.), Amsterdam, 2009, 117.

Antwerp 1537-84<sup>393</sup>) also produced an engraved version (c.1540-50),<sup>394</sup> and this composition but in reverse was also circulated in the 1550s (figs. 73, 74).<sup>395</sup>

Whether they were seen on the street or in art, the blind, maimed or crippled, usually shown as beggars, are unlikely to have elicited sympathy in the sixteenth century.<sup>396</sup> Beggars, pedlars and wanderers had been equated with sin since the Middle Ages and by the early 1500s their numbers had reached phenomenal proportions.<sup>397</sup> A 1526 booklet describes how begging had become so rife that farmers and artisans were struggling to employ sufficient man power because labourers were opting to pursue profitable careers as “professional beggars”.<sup>398</sup> Accordingly, much discourse exists from the sixteenth century that sought to marginalise disabled and blind mendicants as social outcasts, incompatible with a city such as Antwerp’s mercantile economy and its associated sense of social order.<sup>399</sup> The *Liber Vagatorum* (1510),<sup>400</sup> for instance, ascribes moral duplicity and untrustworthiness to the crippled beggar, telling a story about a one-armed beggar who used to sit outside a church with a decapitated arm, to encourage charitable Christians to donate Alms.<sup>401</sup> It transpires, however, that this beggar was a profligate con-artist, who had stolen the arm from a thief’s corpse hanging on the gallows, to dupe passing Christians.<sup>402</sup> Similarly, maimed and eyeless beggars were synonymous with criminality in the 1500s, since such afflictions were often the result of severe corporeal punishment that was then in operation.<sup>403</sup>

Bound up in images of cripples and the blind, therefore, was a host of socio-economic and moral anxieties, which associated disabilities of various kinds with moral duplicity, criminality and ultimate peril:<sup>404</sup> ‘cripples and the blind always come behind’, to cite a contemporary saying.<sup>405</sup> In the *Carnival and Lent* Bruegel showed blind beggars plying their trade and begging for alms outside the Church, which evokes the beggars described in the *Liber Vagatorum* and the currency of these stereotypes about the untrustworthiness of the handicapped mendicant in the convivial environment is indicated by Erasmus’s *Godly Feast*. In

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<sup>393</sup> Hollstein (1997), XI, 174, 202.

<sup>394</sup> J. van der Stock, ‘Enkele nieuwe gegevens over Cornelis Matsys, 1510/11 – April 1566/Januari 1557’, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, (1984), 103-37.

<sup>395</sup> A. Bartsch, *Le Peintre graveur*, Vienna, 1803, IX, 114.

<sup>396</sup> Although cripples in art have sometimes been equated to visual appeals to Christian compassion, in the hands of Bosch in particular the figure of the beggar became decidedly negative, see E. Pokorny, ‘Bosch’s Cripples and Drawings by His Imitators’, *Master Drawings*, XXXXI (Autumn, 2003), 293-304.

<sup>397</sup> M. Camille, *Image on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art*, London, 1992, Ch. 5.

<sup>398</sup> F. de Potter and J. Broeckaert, *Geschiedenis van den Belgischen boerenstand tot op het einde der xviie eeuw*, Brussels, 1881, 262.

<sup>399</sup> See T. Nichols, *The Art of Poverty. Irony and Ideal in Sixteenth-Century Beggar Imagery*, Manchester, 2007, 1-6.

<sup>400</sup> Anonymous, *Liber Vagatorum*, J. C. Hotten (trans. and ed.), London, 1860.

<sup>401</sup> Bax, 66.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Bax, 66; J. W. Saats Everts, *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis der rechtspleging in Gelderland, bijzonder te Arnhem*, Arnhem, 1865, 410.

<sup>404</sup> Nichols, *passim*.

<sup>405</sup> ‘kreupelen en blinden komen altijd achter’, from Bax, 65.

the opening scene, Erasmus used the metaphor of the blind beggar to censure avaricious priests and monks, who 'for the sake of gain usually prefer to live in populous cities, following the precept of a certain blind beggar who rejoiced in the jostling of a crowd because, he would say, where there were people there was profit'.<sup>406</sup> The subject of the blind avaricious clergy was also popular in *rederijker* culture. For example, in a fifteenth-century poem the rhetorician Anthonius de Roovere enumerated some of the ways that the blind lead the blind, which included a corrupted clergy who deceive the laity.<sup>407</sup> Generally, blindness thus signified moral bankruptcy, profligacy and folly, and Bruegel demonstrated the moral bankruptcy of his blind by giving them several attributes that confirm their status as dishonest beggars. The first of Bruegel's men, already in the ditch, carried a hurdy gurdy, which was the common attribute for the blind vagrant in the 1500s (fig. 75).<sup>408</sup> Another wears a gold crucifix and clings to the man in front who carries a purse, thus bringing to mind the avaricious priests described by Erasmus and de Roovere. The motif of the blind man and his purse-wearing leader also features in Bosch's *St Anthony* triptych, where a blinded cripple (carrying a hurdy gurdy) is led by a lute-player who has the snout of a pig, carries a purse pierced by a knife and walks a dog (fig. 76). The purse pierced with a knife likely relates to a passage found in the contemporary *Boor's Song*, 'With a Zealand knife, / So through his purse goes', meaning to squander money and thus identifying this man as a profligate.<sup>409</sup> The dog, meanwhile, likely associated to the proverb 'the one that has a small dog walking beside him', meaning someone who is conceited.<sup>410</sup> Bruegel's re-adoption of these attributes in the *Blind* suggests that the proverbs that inspired Bosch in the fifteenth century to connote blind conceit and folly retained their didactic purchase in the sixteenth century. Consequently, Bruegel's original audience are likely to have identified his blind men as itinerant wanderers, profligate and morally wanton, in keeping with contemporary discourse about the untrustworthiness of the beggar.

## PARODYING THE PILGRIM

These socio-economic anxieties engendered by blindness, however, constitute only one potential level of meaning for Bruegel's *Blind*. Bruegel encouraged the viewer to pursue more profound significances by showing the blind men carrying the quotidian accoutrements of the

<sup>406</sup> Erasmus (1997), I, 175; Wesseling, 81-147.

<sup>407</sup> S. Andriessoon, *Duytsche Adagia ofte Spreecwoorden, Antwerp, Heynrick Alssens, 1550: In Facsimile, Transcription of the Dutch Text and English Translation*, M. Meadow and A. Fleurkens (eds.), Hilversum, 2003, 110, 216.

<sup>408</sup> The hurdy gurdy as an attribute of the blind vagrant was well known in the sixteenth century. A fifteenth-century bible includes a description that reads: 'The lyre [hurdy-gurdy] is an instrument that blind folk are often in the habit of playing...'. Similarly, in the sixteenth century *Esbatement van der Dove Bister* (Comedy of the Deaf-bidding woman), a blind man declares: 't Waer noot da tick nu cost spleen op de liere, blint man, arm man, so ick selver bekinne' ('Twere need that I now could play the hurdy-gurdy, blind man, poor man, as I now confess myself to be'), from Bax, 65, 66<sup>53</sup>. The picture here illustrated shows the blind hurdy gurdy player making his way through a rural village by David Vinckboons I (1576-1529), which was sold at Christie's London 24 October 2012, sale 7201/lot 20.

<sup>409</sup> 'De hiet un hundje neve zich loope', from Bax, 64.

<sup>410</sup> Bax, 64.

pilgrim: cloak, hat and staff. Bruegel's blind thus resemble, in comportment and iconography, pilgrim saints such as *St. James* from the exterior of Bosch's *Last Judgement* (1480s) (fig. 77).<sup>411</sup> In this way, Bruegel conformed to the conventions established in the hitherto existing versions of the subject, in which the blind men are invariably shown as pilgrims (figs. 68-71, 73, 74). In van der Heyden after Bosch (fig. 70), moreover, the blind men's status as pilgrims is unequivocal because the foreground figure's hat features a pilgrim's badge.

The iconography of the pilgrim was often re-appropriated by sixteenth-century artists to signify noble travel. Josephs on the *Flight into Egypt*, for example, often resemble pilgrims, fulfilling their protective role and delivering the Virgin and Christ Child to safety from Herod, who ordered the massacre of all the babies in Bethlehem (Matthew 2: 16-18) (figs. 78, 79). Similarly, Bruegel represented Christ and His Disciples as pilgrims on their way to Emmaus in a composition that was engraved by Philips Galle (1571) (fig. 80).<sup>412</sup> The iconography of the blind pilgrim in particular, however, was remarkably popular in Netherlandish art and has been analysed by Heinke Sudhoff.<sup>413</sup> Sudhoff concluded that the blind pilgrim in Netherlandish art can often be designated to one of two categories. In the first are those pictures that dwell on miraculous cure and attribute honest motivations of faith and spiritual hope to the blind man's pilgrimage (*Blindenheilun*). The iconography of pilgrimage, however, was also open to subversion and parody, used to signify feigned, outward, acts of faith.<sup>414</sup> So in the second category are those representations of morally depraved blind pilgrims, which focus on the inevitable fall of the blind (*Blindensturz*).<sup>415</sup>

The motif of the good blind pilgrim (*Blindenheilung*) led by a seeing guide was popular in sixteenth-century religious painting. In (?)Adriaen Ysenbrandt's *Deposition* (fig. 81),<sup>416</sup> for example, a blind pilgrim is shown being led by his guide to Golgotha, which Kahren Hellerstedt interprets as an optimistic motif, recalling contemporary plays such as the *Passion of Semur* that

<sup>411</sup> This triptych is not identical to the documented triptych showing the *Last Judgement* that Bosch made for Philip the Fair in 1504, since the contracted dimensions do not match the dimensions of the extant triptych in Vienna. Doubts have been raised at various times about the authenticity of this work. It is in all probability, however, genuine but has suffered numerous "restorations" that have hindered the appearance of the work, see Marijnissen (1987), 214. On the date, see Vermet, 88, who gives the date 1482 as the terminus post quem for the triptych according to dendrochronological analysis.

<sup>412</sup> Hollstein, *The new Hollstein Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450 – 1700*. Philips Galle, Sellink (comp.) and Leesberg (ed.), Rotterdam, 2001, II, 60-61.

<sup>413</sup> As H. Sudhoff demonstrated in *Ikongraphische Untersuchungen zur 'Blindheilung' und zum 'Blindensturz': ein Beitrag zu Pieter Bruegels Neapler Gemälde von 1568*, unpublished dissertation, Bonn University, 1981, 8-9. Kahren Hellerstedt similarly concluded that blind pilgrims in sixteenth-century art do generally conform to stereotypes of the good or bad blind pilgrim, see "The blind man and his guide in Netherlandish painting", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XIII (1983), 163-181.

<sup>414</sup> B. Haeger, "The Prodigal Son in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Art: Depictions of the Parable and the Evolution of a Catholic Image", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XVI (1986), 129; Pinson, *passim*.

<sup>415</sup> Sudhoff, 8-9.

<sup>416</sup> By Friedländer (as in n.11), XI, 52, 81. Friedländer attributed this triptych partly to Ysenbrandt but described it as a work of little distinction.

describe blind men whose vision is restored following a pilgrimage to Golgotha.<sup>417</sup> These incidental motifs and their theatrical counterparts were in turn inspired by Biblical stories about Christ's miraculous healing of the blind man near Jericho. Christ healed the blind man to reward his faith, exclaiming 'Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 18:42) and sixteenth-century pictures depicting this episode often show extra-Biblical blind or maimed pilgrims in attendance, thus forging a link between them and honest, genuine pilgrimage (fig. 82). Furthermore, the thematic associations between good blind pilgrims and the Holy Family travelling was apparently familiar to sixteenth-century artists and their audiences, since Massys and Herri both included blind men and their guides in their versions of the *Arrival at Bethlehem* and the *Flight into Egypt*, respectively (figs. 83, 84).<sup>418</sup> Elsewhere, the visionless pilgrim was depicted in art and drama to inspire sympathy for the vulnerability of the blind at the hands of the seeing. The *Farce of Tournai* (c. 1266-90), for example, tells of a blind man that acquires a young leader, who, having agreed to lead the blind man to Tournai in exchange for a share of his Alms, turns out to be a schemer and leads his blind follower into raucousness, drunkenness and eventually steals everything he possesses.<sup>419</sup> It is this kind of amoral leader that we encounter in Bosch's *Haywain* (c.1510<sup>420</sup>) (fig. 85), where a blind man<sup>421</sup> is shown being led naïvely by his guide towards the hay cart in this tour de force allegory of avarice, in which mankind advances headlong into Purgatory.<sup>422</sup> A similar narrative is enacted in the *Hay Allegory*, an etching of Netherlandish manufacture dated c.1550, which likewise shows a blind man being led towards the cart.<sup>423</sup>

Given the social anxieties surrounding the blind man, however, the good blind pilgrim was counterbalanced by the bad (*Blindensturz*), inverting the trope of the innocent sightless pilgrim so that it is the blind man who corrupts the seeing and leads both into catastrophe. The Spanish picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*, published in Antwerp in 1554,<sup>424</sup> described the trials of Lazaro who, following the death of his father, was placed under the care of a roving blind man by his incapable mother. The blind man, however, turns out to be wicked and depraved, corrupting Lazaro and teaching him how to get on in the world by exploiting the

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<sup>417</sup> Hellerstedt, 167.

<sup>418</sup> Sold at Sotheby's London, 5 December 2012, sale L12036, lot 33.

<sup>419</sup> R. Axton and J. Stevens (trans.), *Medieval French plays*, Oxford, 1971, 197-206.

<sup>420</sup> Vermet, 88.

<sup>421</sup> According to Hellerstedt, 163-655, 174.

<sup>422</sup> For an excellent summary of the various interpretations of this triptych, see Marijnissen (1987), 52-83.

<sup>423</sup> P. Vandenbroeck, 'Nieuw materiaal voor de studie van het Hooiwagen-motief', *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Jaarboek 1984*, 1984, 60; reproduced in Gibson (2010), 64.

<sup>424</sup> A. D. Deyermond, *Lazarillo de Tormes. A critical guide*, London, 1975, 11; M. Alpert (ed. and trans.), *Two Spanish Picaresque Novels: Lazarillo de Tormes. The Swindler*, Harmondsworth, 1969, 7-20. It was also available in English translation in the 1560s, see R. Cummings, 'Recent Studies in English Translation c. 1520 – c. 1590', *English Literary Renaissance*, XXXVII (May 2007), 310.



credulity of charitable Christians and living off the proceeds.<sup>425</sup> Blindness also featured in *De verkeerde wereld* (World Upside Down) imagery.<sup>426</sup> World Upside Down broadsheets were incredibly popular in the mid-1500s whose imagery was inspired by proverbs but used them to subversive effect, to contravene or deny some natural or expected order for didactic purposes.<sup>427</sup> In *verkeerde wereld* imagery the parable of the blind leading the blind thus becomes the blind lead the seeing (fig. 86),<sup>428</sup> to condemn the errant ways of the seeing man who *chooses* to follow the sightless into peril.

Iconographically, Bruegel's blind pilgrims relate to the foregoing stereotypes. Bruegel's blind, however, clearly do not correspond to the good pilgrim travelling with the hope of having their sight restored by dint of their faith, because the attributes that Bruegel has given them demonstrate the worldliness of their endeavours, connoting profligacy and moral duplicity. Neither do Bruegel's blind signify the innocent sightless, succumbing to wily seeing guides, since the first man's blindness is indicated by the hurdy gurdy. Bruegel's image thus perpetuated the stereotyped bad pilgrim, dwelling on the inevitable demise of such unscrupulous living (*Blindensturz*). Bruegel's picture, however, achieves a particularly tragic pathos. In a departure from scripture and hitherto existing art (the closest precedent is Massys' engraving that showed four men), Bruegel showed six blind men, who are connected by arms and walking sticks that form a downwards arc towards the brook mirroring the slope of the earth beneath their feet. By increasing the number of men, Bruegel's picture thus emphasises the frailty of the human condition on a wider sense, evoking the *voorgaende menichte* (hurrying blind crowd), popular in contemporary drama, while the downward slope makes it inevitable that the sixth man will join the first in the ditch, even though, at the depicted moment, he remains standing. The hurrying crowd's worldly pilgrimage was indeed the subject of the contemporary play *Esbatement van der Dove Bister* (Comedy of the Deaf-bidding woman), which explicitly describes blind vagrants wandering around the countryside seeking assistance in their worldly pursuits but who inevitably end-up in the ditch.<sup>429</sup> The unsparing realism with which Bruegel depicted blindness is also here relevant. Unlike *verkeerde wereld* imagery or Karlsdadt, who, according to Emser, had 'eyes you can open and close, yet still you are blind',<sup>430</sup> Bruegel here shows blindness as a fundamental deficiency. His scientific exactitude serves to convey humanity's inability to see or

<sup>425</sup> Ibid; T. Hanrahan, "Lazarillo de Tormes": Erasmus Satire of Protestant Reform?', *Hispania*, LXVI (Sep., 1983), 333-39; T. Anthony Perry, 'Biblical Symbolism in the "Lazarillo de Tormes"', *Studies in Philology*, LXVII (Apr., 1970), 139-46.

<sup>426</sup> Kunzle, 197-202<sup>1</sup>; R. W. Brednich, 'Die holländisch-flämischen Sprichwortbilderbogen vom Typus "De Blauwe Huyck"', W. van Nespen (ed.), *Miscellanea. Prof. Em. Dr. K.C. Peeters. Antwerpen: C. Govaert*, Antwerp, 1975, 120-131.

<sup>427</sup> Kunzle, 197-202.

<sup>428</sup> 'de blinde leydt de siende', from Kunzle, 198.

<sup>429</sup> See above n. 407.

<sup>430</sup> Mangrum and Scavizzi, 46-47.

comprehend their own folly, since they have not chosen to close their eyes but literally lack the power of sight.

#### THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SEEING BLINDNESS: BLINDNESS AS LACK OF REASON

The iconography of the bad blind pilgrim, perpetuated by Bruegel's *Blind*, therefore indicates a depraved moral state as the antithesis of saintly pilgrimages or the good blind pilgrim travelling with faith and hope. The moral signification of Bruegel's *Blind* is made clear in the inscriptions appended to the engraved versions. The Wiericx or van der Heyden after Bruegel tondo is framed with the inscription: "Travel always with caution,/ Be true, trust nobody other than God in everything: Because when one blind man another leads,/ One sees that they fall together in the ditch."<sup>431</sup> Van der Heyden after Bosch, meanwhile, is inscribed with a text provided in Latin and French,<sup>432</sup> and van der Heyden after Bol carries the same two inscriptions together with a third Dutch translation.<sup>433</sup> Roughly, the text reads:

See how the poor blind man carries himself, he who ignorantly trusts another blind man. He isn't very steady even though he leans heavily on, and hangs on-to, his companion. Thus through this immoral<sup>434</sup> fashion they fall into the ditch, both him and his escort.<sup>435</sup>

Clearly, the intended function of the parable of the blind in art was to implore the *seeing* viewer to recognise their own privileged status as the seeing and to learn from the negative example of blindness put before them. Indeed, we get a sense of the epistemological value of seeing blindness in art as it was perceived by Bruegel's original audience from Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* (1538) in which he wrote: 'sharper minds, like clear-sighted men, follow their eyes; dull ones, by contrast, like blind men, have to grope their way along by touch'.<sup>436</sup> If Agricola's statement vouches for more widespread concerns among the lay intelligentsia, remembering that the Stoic exhortation to see and observe folly was current in Bruegel's milieu, then we begin to appreciate how the original viewers of Bruegel's *Blind* would likely have considered their own position as the seeing as being a privileged one. Consequently, pictures

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<sup>431</sup> 'Wandelt altijt in voorsichticheijt,/ Sijt ghetrou, betrouit niemant, dan in Godt in allen: Want om dat deen blinde dander leijt/ Sietmense beij stamen inden gracht vallen.' Quoted from van Bastelaer, 241.

<sup>432</sup> Bottom left: 'Caecus ducem se praebet alteri caecos; / Quod saepe nunc usuuenire lugendum est. / Quid restat autem? quid? nisi ut uiae ignari, / Qua destinatum consequi scopum detur, / Tandem in patentem uterque corruant foßam?' And bottom right: 'Voÿez comment le pauvre aueugle en fin se porte, / Qui sur un autre aueugle ignoramment se fie. / Il ua mal außeure quoy que fort il s'appuÿe. / Et se tienne a son homme. Ansi par male sorte / Tombent dans le fosse et luÿ, et son escorte.'

<sup>433</sup> The inscription at bottom left of van der Heyden after Bol is identical to the one at bottom right in van der Heyden after Bosch, and the middle inscription is taken from the left of van der Heyden after Bosch. The inscription furthest right in Dutch on van der Heyden after Bol reads: 'Daer de ene blinde de ander leÿde / Vallenze beÿde onuerziens inde sloot / Bÿdÿ blindt? ende bekendt ghÿ u blindtheÿdt / Nempt gheen leÿdtsman, oft zÿt verzekert, bloot / Van zÿn ghezichte, anders brengdy u zelf in root.'

<sup>434</sup> 'mal' in the French could here be translated as immoral, wicked, bad or difficult.

<sup>435</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth L'Estrange, University of Birmingham, for her assistance translating these inscriptions.

<sup>436</sup> B. Rothstein, 'The Problem with Looking at Pieter Bruegel's Elck', *Art History*, XXVI (Apr., 2003), 143.

showing blindness likely served to admonish the seeing viewer to ‘follow their eyes’, to exercise sharpness of perception and not to behave in a blinded fashion.

Erasmus also explained the meaning of the proverb *Cæcus Cæco Dux* (The blind leading the blind) in his *Adagoria*, first published 1500,<sup>437</sup> expanded in 1508<sup>438</sup> and published throughout the century.<sup>439</sup> Erasmus wrote:

Men incapable of managing their own affairs, pretending to conduct those of others, or young men advising with others equally inexperienced as themselves, instead of following the counsel of their elders, are like blind men trusting to the guidance of the blind. “But if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”<sup>440</sup>

Here Erasmus explicitly invokes blindness as a metaphor for a lack of reason and these specific associations between impaired vision and deficient reason were clearly familiar in the sixteenth-century. In the 1561 *Landjuweel* at Antwerp (a competition that invited *rederijker kamers* from across Brabant to perform), the selling and wearing of spectacles meant to deliberately mislead someone or to be misled.<sup>441</sup> And in the 1563 *Ommengang* at Antwerp, a pageant staged on the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, new *punten* (floats) were produced that were dedicated to the follies of *Elck* (Everyman), the third float of which depicted Old Deceit, who, wearing a necklace decorated with eyeglasses, blinds *Elck*.<sup>442</sup> Bruegel, who probably saw the 1563 *Ommengang*, was clearly aware of these links between impaired vision and a lack of reason since his own version of *Elck* (1558) (fig. 22) shows a bespectacled *Elck* and thus forges a connection between *Elck*’s preoccupation with the worthless worldly ephemera that surrounds him and everyman’s lack of reason in the general sense.

Ripa also gave a lack of reason as a cause for blindness in his aforementioned *Iconologia*. Here, the personification of “Error” is shown blindfolded, wearing a pilgrim’s habit and roaming the countryside with the aid of a crutch—thus continuing the iconography of Bruegel’s blind (fig. 87).<sup>443</sup> The *subscriptio* reads:

A Man in a Pilgrims habit, groping out his Way blind-fold. The Cloth binding him signifies Man’s falling into *Error*, when his mind is darkened by *Worldly* concerns; the staff, his being apt to stumble, if he take not the Guides of the Spirit, and of right Reason.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Erasmus, *Adagiorum collectanea*, Paris, 1500, see Erasmus (1997), IX.

<sup>438</sup> Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades*, 1508, see Erasmus (1997), XXXIV.

<sup>439</sup> A facsimile edition was published in 1550 by Henry Stevens, for example, see R. Bland, *Proverbs, chiefly taken from the Adagia of Erasmus, with explanations*, London, 1814, v; Sartorius published an abbreviated version as a schoolbook in 1544 and ’61, see Gibson (2010), 11.

<sup>440</sup> Quoted from Bland, 180; I. Bejczy, *Erasmus and the Middle Ages. The Historical Consciousness of a Christian Humanist*, Leiden, 2001, 42-3.

<sup>441</sup> G. D. J. Schotel, *Geschiedenis der Rederijkers in Nederland*, Rotterdam, 1871.

<sup>442</sup> Gibson (2010), 37, 94

<sup>443</sup> C. G. Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien. Untersuchungen zu den ikonologischen Problemen bei Pieter Bruegel d.Ä. sowie dessen Beziehungen zum niederländischen Romanismus*, Soest, 1977, 260, ill.85.

<sup>444</sup> Ripa, as above n.312 and quoted from Tempest, 47.

Ripa's description of the pilgrim, groping his way through the world with worldly concerns neatly describes Bruegel's blind men. Ripa, however, elaborated Erasmus's description of blindness meaning a lack of reason by giving a lack of faith ('Spirit') as a specific cause of blindness. Bruegel's parodying of the pilgrim connotes the blind men's lack of faith implicitly, but he made this meaning explicit by utilising iconographic juxtaposition.

#### BLINDNESS AS SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

The connection between blindness and spiritual ignorance was made by the Church Fathers. In two of Jerome's epistles, for example, in Letter LXVIII to Castrutius,<sup>445</sup> who had attempted a pilgrimage to see Jerome, and Letter LXXVI to Abigaus, who had requested Jerome's prayers to help him overcome evil,<sup>446</sup> Jerome avowed the supremacy of spiritual, over carnal, vision. In both, Jerome assured his recipients that their blindness was not, in this instance, a result of sin and Jerome exhorted both to not despair their lack of physical sight by referring to his teacher Didymus the Blind (c.313-98<sup>447</sup>), who, despite being blind, was renowned for his incredible erudition.<sup>448</sup> Jerome explained:

Didymus, a man of great learning who had lost his eyes, came to visit [St. Anthony]... the conversation turning upon the holy scriptures, Antony could not help admiring his ability and eulogizing his insight. At last he said: "You do not regret, do you, the loss of your eyes?" At first Didymus was ashamed to answer, but... confessed that his blindness was a great grief to him. Whereupon Antony said: "I am surprised that a wise man should grieve at the loss of a faculty which he shares with ants and flies and gnats, and not rejoice rather in having one of which only saints and apostles have been thought worthy." From this story you may perceive how much better it is to have spiritual than carnal vision and to possess eyes into which the mote of sin cannot fall.<sup>449</sup>

Here, Jerome drew an important distinction between carnal vision, which is vulnerable to being tainted by sin, and spiritual vision, which he describes as superior and the existence of which is not precluded by a lack of physical sight. Erasmus keenly studied the Church Fathers, especially Jerome, whose corpus including the epistles he published in 1516.<sup>450</sup> The epistles were also published in anthology form in Antwerp in 1515 and '33 by Willem Vorsterman—the city's pre-eminent publisher in the first half of the 1500s<sup>451</sup>—and later in the century by Plantin.<sup>452</sup> Jerome's epistles therefore, including Letters LXVIII and Letter LXXVI, were not unknown in

<sup>445</sup> Jerome, Letter LXVIII, 397, from W. H. Fremantle, *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, New York, 1983, 140-41.

<sup>446</sup> Jerome, Letter LXXVI, c.397, see Fremantle, 156-57 and on the matters of date, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, Peabody, 1998, 213, 216.

<sup>447</sup> W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Minnesota, 1979, II, 60.

<sup>448</sup> R. A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and his circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, Illinois, 2004.

<sup>449</sup> Fremantle, 140-41.

<sup>450</sup> Erasmus, *Omnium operum divi Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis tomus primus (- nonus), una cum argumentis et scholiis Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, Basel, 1516; H. Pabel, 'Reading Jerome in the Renaissance: Erasmus' Reception of the 'Adversus Jovinianum', *Renaissance Quarterly*, LV (Summer, 2002), 470-97.

<sup>451</sup> Pabel, 'Erasmus, Willem Vorsterman, and the Printing of St Jerome's Letters', *Quaerendo. A Quarterly Journal from the Low Countries Devoted to Manuscripts and Printed Books*, XXXVII (2007), 267-90.

<sup>452</sup> T. L. de Vinne, *Christopher Plantin and the Plantin-Moretus Museum*, New York, 1888, 86.

Antwerp and the popular currency of Jerome's concept of spiritual vision is suggested by a New Year's *referein* (a poetic exposition authored by a rhetorician to explain and elucidate the meaning of a proverb<sup>453</sup>) that was published in 1567 by Anna Bijns, in which she discussed the proverb of the blind and implored God to open the eyes of those who had become spiritually blinded and stumble into the ditch.<sup>454</sup>

Bruegel articulated the spiritual blindness of his six men by contrasting their unsteady decline with the firmer prospects shown behind them surrounding the Church. According to this arrangement, Bruegel's blind have literally turned their back on the Church and thus faith. Bruegel had depicted the blind men in this way in his earlier *Netherlandish Proverbs*, who have similarly turned their backs on the church (fig. 67). This juxtaposition was originally enforced in Bruegel's *Blind*, however, by the inclusion a herdsman and some fowl in the picture's middle ground.<sup>455</sup> This detail is now abraded in the original (fig. 88) but is evident in several derivative paintings by anonymous followers<sup>456</sup> and Pieter II (fig. 89, 90).<sup>457</sup> In line with the tradition of the good shepherd or peasant, frequently encountered in manuscripts from the period,<sup>458</sup> this figure in the *Blind* represents duty fulfilled. Indeed, the positive spiritual associations intended by the herdsman is indicated by two now-lost pictures by Bruegel, known through copies, showing the parable of the good and bad shepherd (figs. 91, 92).<sup>459</sup> In one of these, the dutiful shepherd sacrifices himself to the wolf to save his flock, while in the other the bad shepherd abandons his duties, leaving the flock vulnerable to attack. The associations with faith, personified by the good shepherd and relinquished by the bad, were secured by the Biblical import of the good shepherd from John, in which Christ described himself as a shepherd protecting his flock, meaning the Christian congregation: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep' (John 10:1-30). These associations likely crossed over to the herdsman in Bruegel's *Blind*, who, standing on the firmer ground surrounding the Church, likely signified duty fulfilled and faith in deliberate contradistinction to the spiritually blinded men stumbling into the ditch at the foreground.

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<sup>453</sup> Gibson (2010), 33.

<sup>454</sup> Y. Mori, 'The Influence of German and Flemish Prints on the Work of Pieter Bruegel', *Bulletin of the Tamara Art School*, II (1976), 55.

<sup>455</sup> I first became aware of this in an article by L. Silver, see 'Pieter Bruegel in the Capital of Capitalism', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXXVII (1996), 142<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>456</sup> Illustrated here is the picture sold at Christie's, London, in April 2008, sale 7575, lot 8, attributed at the time of auction to an anonymous follower of Bruegel.

<sup>457</sup> Illustrated here is a detail from the picture in the Louvre, Paris, attributed to Pieter II in Ertz (1998-2000) and the picture now in the Wellcome Collection, London, which is also attributed to Pieter II.

<sup>458</sup> Gibson, 'Festive Peasants before Bruegel: Three case studies and their implications', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXXI (2004-2005), 292-309, who discusses the good and bad peasant stereotypes.

<sup>459</sup> A version of the Good Shepherd turned up for sale at Christie's New York, April 2006, sale 1620, lot 39.

Indeed, Bruegel used the motif of the good peasant to contrast worldly error elsewhere. In the *Fall of Icarus* (the original of which is lost but is known through copies (fig. 93)<sup>460</sup>), for example, Bruegel showed the ploughman and shepherd to signify honest labour, humility and duty fulfilled to contrast the obstinacy and prideful ambition of Icarus, who has plummeted from the sky to his death in the sea.<sup>461</sup> And juxtaposing virtue with vice in this way was a common device in contemporary *rederijker* drama. Generally, *rederijker* drama consisted of three distinct types: *facties*, *kluchten* and *spelen van sinne*.<sup>462</sup> Deriving from medieval morality plays, of these *spelen van sinne* were the most serious and it is to this category that plays about blindness usually belonged.<sup>463</sup> A common feature of *spelen* was allegorical personifications of the Virtues and Vices (*sinnekens*) such as Hope, Willing Labour and Upright Simple Faith, who invariably triumph over their opposites including Earthly Desire and Lord Profit.<sup>464</sup> Given the worldly, feigned nature to the blind men's pilgrimage in Bruegel's *Blind* it is not unlikely that his original audience would have connected the herdsman with his theatrical counterparts such as Upright Simple Faith, and meanwhile would have compared the blind men to their theatrical counterparts such as Earthly Desire.

The status of the herdsman in Bruegel's *Blind* as a representation of simple faith is confirmed by the fact that Bruegel also painted the subject of the herdsman and fowl independently in a composition known as the *Goose Herder*, which is known through Pieter II's copy (fig. 94).<sup>465</sup> This picture related to the proverb 'Who knows why the geese go barefoot?', which concerned the futility of trying to find a justification for every aspect of God's creation, championing instead resignation to the fact that everything has its reason.<sup>466</sup> The recurrence of the motif of the herdsman in the *Blind*, therefore, could have encouraged original viewers to consider the relevance of this proverb to Bruegel's picture, which would have enforced this figure's role as a representation of, and exhortation to, simple faith; a faith that, according to the proverb, should not be questioned but merely accepted. Another thematically related proverb that 'even a blind man might perceive it', meaning something so obvious that the sightless can comprehend it,<sup>467</sup> might also have entered conversation conducted in front of Bruegel's picture. This proverb would have reiterated the folly of Bruegel's blind men who have failed to perceive

<sup>460</sup> Currie and Allart, III, 844-79.

<sup>461</sup> Kilinski, 91-114; L. de Vries, 'Bruegel's "Fall of Icarus": Ovid or Solomon?', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, XXX (2003), 4-18.

<sup>462</sup> *Facties* were humorous satires, *kluchten* were primarily farces, focusing in particular on village life, see Gibson (1981), 428; G. Degroote, *Oude klanken, nieuwe accenten: De kunst van de rederijkers*, Leiden, 1969, 24-9.

<sup>463</sup> Such as Jacopsz's aforementioned *De Ghepredestineerde Blinde*, see above n. 321; Gibson (1981), 431.

<sup>464</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, *De sinnekens in het Rederijkersdrama*, Groningen, 1958; Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijkersdrama, 1500-ca. 1620*, Assen, 1960, 287-338.

<sup>465</sup> Sold at Christie's London, 24 April 2009, sale 7714, lot 19; Ertz identified four derivative paintings from the Elder Bruegel's lost prototype see Ertz (1984), I, 133-7, II, 205-6, nos. E97-E100.

<sup>466</sup> 'Wie weet waeromme de ganze bervoets gaen?', from Ertz (1998-2000), I, 133-7, II, 205-6,

<sup>467</sup> 'Vel Cæco apaat', quoted from Bland (as in n.440).

the merits of simple faith, which would otherwise have saved them from peril. Once more, these proverbial referents serve to emphasise the choice afforded to the seeing viewer discussing Bruegel's picture, who can either choose to behave in a blinded fashion or to exercise spiritual vision, faith and prudence to the advantage of their spiritual wellbeing.

Indeed, such links as these between acknowledging faith and having sight restored were made in contemporary drama. In Jacopz's previously mentioned *De Ghepredestineerde Blinde*, a blind man is described who is led away from the sermon of S. John by an old woman who staunchly defends the Old Law.<sup>468</sup> Later, however, the blind man's vision is restored by Christ who subsequently vows to never again be led astray by the old woman, who was clearly intended as an allegory of Synagoga whose blindness was often remarked upon in art and literature of the period to indicate of her status as spiritually blind and blinding.<sup>469</sup> The restoration of sight in Jacopz's play is thus analogous to the sense of spiritual awakening of the type encouraged by Bruegel's painting.

Finally, like Bruegel's *Carrying*, the *Blind* must also must have had some topical significance. The motif of the herdsman, used to signify duty fulfilled and simple faith also signified leadership. Christ referred to himself as a shepherd as a metaphor for his leadership of Christians, and Christ as the shepherd, offering and imploring leadership, was a standard Christian trope. Raphael showed Christ as the shepherd in his cartoon showing *Christ's Charge of Peter* (fig. 95)—one of ten designs for tapestries intended for the Sistine Chapel that were woven in Brussels between 1517 and '18<sup>470</sup>—, in which Christ points to the flock of sheep to represent the Christian congregation whom he admonishes Peter to lead as the first Pope. Raphael's cartoons remained in the Netherlands after the tapestries were weaved,<sup>471</sup> and certain compositional similarities between Bruegel's *Blind* and the cartoon suggest that Bruegel could have been familiar with it. These include the positioning of the principal characters parallel to the picture plane and, indeed, the motif of the shepherd/herdsman. Bruegel, however, re-appropriated this iconography to invert its signification and suggest a lack of spiritual leadership. Unlike Raphael's disciples, Bruegel's blind lack a capable leader, cannot see the church or herdsman and so stumble, sightless, into the ditch. For the seeing viewer, this may have provoked topical considerations about the lack of coherent spiritual leadership offered by the church during the 1560s, whether Protestant or Catholic, which was more divided than ever by the religious and political disputes that I described in the Introduction to this thesis. For the

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<sup>468</sup> As above n.321.

<sup>469</sup> W. S. Seifert, *Synagogue and church in the middle ages: two symbols in art and literature*, L. Chadeayne and P. Gottwald (trans.), New York, 1970, 95-109.

<sup>470</sup> S. Fermar and A. Derbyshire, 'The Raphael Tapestry Cartoons Re-Examined', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXL (Apr., 1998), 236-50; J. White and J. Shearman, 'Raphael's Tapestries and Their Cartoons', *The Art Bulletin*, XXXX (Sep., 1958), 193-221.

<sup>471</sup> C. Browne, 'The influence of the Cartoons on sixteenth-century tapestry design', M. Evans, Browne and A. Nesselrath (eds.), *Raphael. Cartoons and Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel*, London, 2010, 44-48.

seeing viewer, therefore, the Church and herdsman in Bruegel's *Blind* provided optimism, sanctioning pragmatic and personal faith as a response to the sense of religious crises and uncertainty that is signified in Bruegel's picture by the blind men stumbling into peril.

## CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I have attempted to further explore the currency of spiritual blindness in Bruegel's milieu and to consider how contemporary drama, art and literature would have shaped Bruegel's original audience's understanding and interpretation of his *Blind*. As with the *Carrying*, the *Blind* once more indicates the multi-facetedness of Bruegel's imagery and the ways in which it might have elicited several meanings during a discussion conducted in the domestic environment. On one level, Bruegel's *Blind* could have provoked a range of socio-economic considerations on the part of its prosperous owner and his friends, who may have considered the social and economic threats posed by handicapped mendicants on the street. Bruegel's deliberate subversion of pilgrim iconography, however, coupled with his use of iconographic juxtaposition, likely encouraged the original viewer to consider other arguably more profound significances about spiritual blindness and the perilous consequences of living a faithless, dissolute life. The herdsman and Church, I have argued, combine to form a visual exhortation designed to encourage the *seeing* viewer to censure the errant ways of the blind men and to recognise the redeeming merits of simple faith. In this way, I have also suggested that Bruegel's picture probably had a certain degree of topical appeal. The viewer may well have drawn analogies between the lack of spiritual leadership that has lead the blind men in Bruegel's picture into peril and the equally potentially disastrous lack of leadership provided by the church in the 1560s. Yet again, however, the topical dimension in Bruegel's picture is neither partisan nor propagandist, since the picture does not condemn any particular Church, whether Catholic or Protestant. Rather, I would suggest that the topical appeal of Bruegel's image was intended to justify the pragmatic and personal approach to faith that I have suggested was popular among Bruegel's Erasmian circle. The herdsman, who the pictured men cannot see, likely was intended to remind the viewer of the redeeming merits of simple faith, a kind of faith that is divested of exterior constraints of a political or a denominational kind. The picture's imagery and all its referents, pictorial, proverbial and existential, consequently placed onus on the seeing viewer, who should choose to acknowledge and exercise simple faith, keeping an eye, as it were, on the church, so as to avoid the fate of the pictured blind protagonists.



## Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have argued that to gain a truer grasp of the cultural significances embodied in, and elicited by, Bruegel's paintings we must go back to the ways in which they were originally displayed and by whom. Doing so enables us to reconstruct, with historical specificity, the ways in which Bruegel's art functioned epistemologically and was understood by its original audiences. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that Bruegel did indeed paint knowingly and discriminatively for cultured patrons—humanists, merchants and professionals in cities such as Antwerp and Brussels—who displayed his paintings in the home to function as stimulants to discussion, discussions that were modelled on the exemplum provided by ancient and contemporary *convivium* literature. I have demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3 how, in this context, individuals could have freely and tolerantly discussed and interpreted the multivalent meanings engendered by Bruegel's imagery, which they achieved by invoking other art, literature and drama (i.e. 'paratextual material'). I have also suggested that Bruegel confronts us as an artist who self-consciously manipulated this audience by taking full advantage of Antwerp's thriving print culture during the 1550s and '60s. By utilising the vast amount of visual and literary material was readily available to him on the print market, Bruegel was able to produce pictures that begged decipherment and discursive interpretation by the 'implied beholder' for his pictures.

This approach has allowed for historically-specific and historically-situated understandings of Bruegel's imagery, rather than ahistorically supposing that Bruegel painted with a propagandist or polemical agenda. Indeed, not only does the convivial setting support this conclusion, since *convivium* literature and convivial sociability in the sixteenth-century are both marked by tolerance, but I have also suggested that Bruegel's intended audience exercised a general and pragmatic lack of interest in religious and political polemics and would likely have identified themselves as Erasmians. Their discussions about Bruegel's art are therefore likely, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, to have been chiefly concerned with advancing Christian morality as part of an emerging ideology among the lay intelligentsia in cities such as Antwerp around the mid sixteenth century, which disavowed partisanship and prioritised subjective spiritual self-fashioning. In particular, my interpretation of the two selected pictures has focused on contemporary discourse about sight and figurative blindness, which would have appealed in particular to Bruegel's audience given the popularity of Stoicism that championed the requirement to see and observe human folly so as to learn from its negative example. Demonstrating the currency of such ocular metaphors tells us a great deal about the original function of Bruegel's pictures and the moral-pedagogic value attached to the dialectical act of looking at, and interpreting, art among Bruegel's learned contemporaries. Prosopography,

defined as the investigation of the common characteristics of a given historical group by means of a collective study of their lives,<sup>472</sup> might enable the conclusion to this thesis that Bruegel himself likewise shared his audience's disinterest in polemics and also exercised Erasmian beliefs. Further prosopographical study of Bruegel and his milieu may, in the future, allow this conclusion to be stated more forcefully and identify further parallels between Bruegel's agenda as an artist and the epistemological, religious and spiritual concerns of his intended audience. Such research could also shed much-needed light on the associated issues of art and artistic responses to religious crises in the Netherlands during the reformation and counter-reformation.

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<sup>472</sup> L. Stone, 'Prosopography', *Dædalus*, C (Winter, 1971), 46-79; K. Verboven, M. Carlier and J. Dumolyn, 'A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography', K. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography Approaches and Applications A Handbook*, Oxford, 2007, 35-69.



















































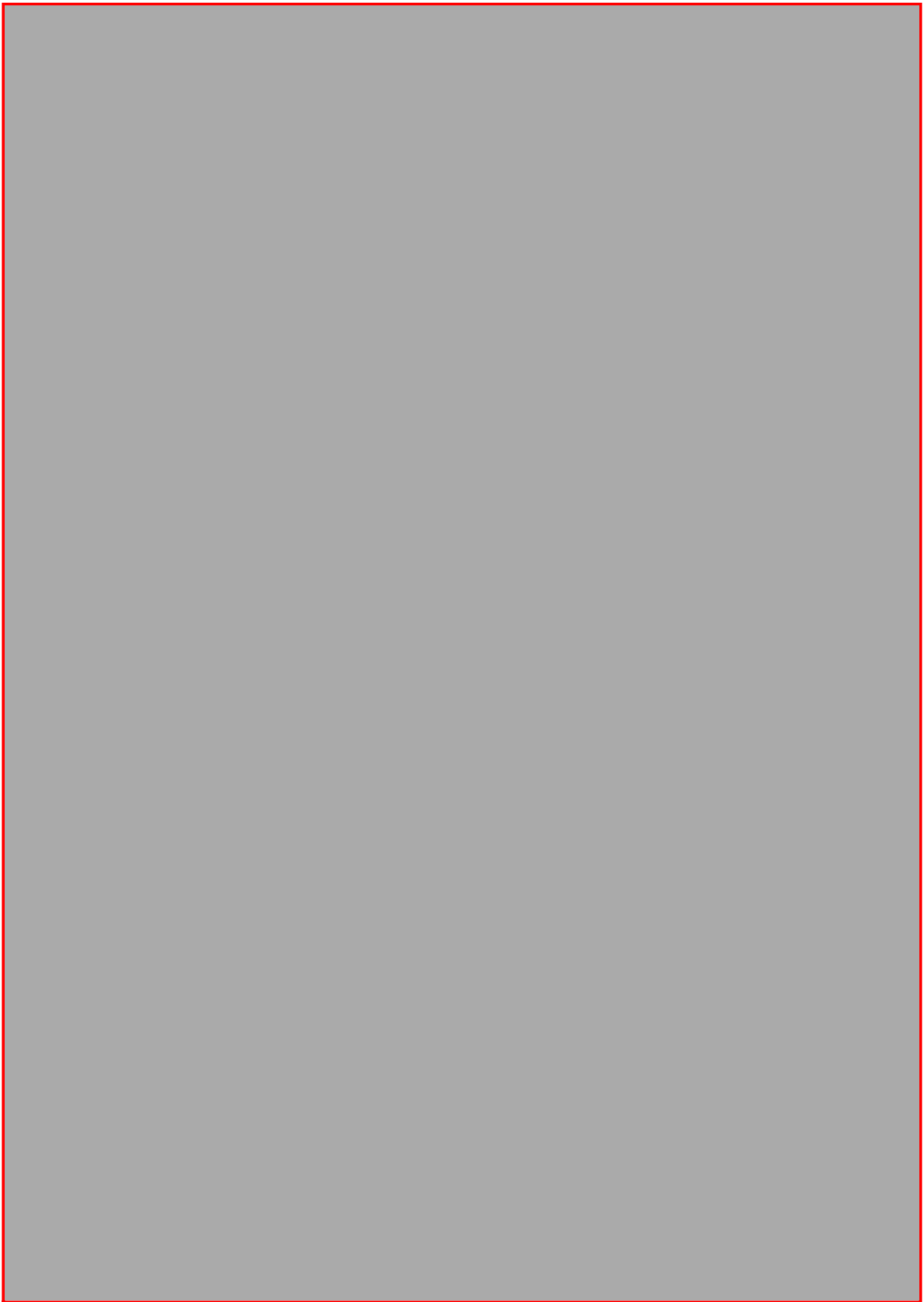












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