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Hieronymus Bosch and the "World Upside Down": The Case of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

THE writing of art history is often regarded as if it were a self-evident enterprise in which historians share common assumptions and common goals. What matters, it is thought, are not the theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures that animate the work so much as the empirical "evidence" the study brings to bear on the interpretation in question. The lack of articulated assumptions implies that such theoretical considerations are unnecessary because all practitioners share the same point of view. As a consequence, it is possible for the discipline to operate on the basis of a hidden agenda, one that is difficult to challenge because it is not supposed to exist. This essay, however, is as much concerned with the ways in which we have tried to make sense of the work of Hieronymus Bosch as it is with the construction of a new interpretation of its significance; that is, it is especially interested in what the historian brings to the work of interpretation. As a consequence, I shall try to define some of the most important presuppositions underlying current scholarship on Bosch, as well as the perspective from which my own proposal is made.

A superficial acquaintance with the scholarly literature on Bosch reveals that, while the artist's work has been almost universally acknowledged to be enigmatic, one author after another has approached it as if it were a puzzle that needed solving or a code that should be broken. Erwin Panofsky epitomized this attitude when he wrote in *Early Netherlandish Painting*:

In spite of all the ingenious, erudite and in part extremely useful research devoted to the task of "decoding Jerome Bosch," I cannot help feeling that the real secret of his magnificent nightmares and daydreams has still to be disclosed. We have bored a few holes through the door of the locked room; but somehow we do not seem to have discovered the key.¹

Many competing interpretations suggest that Bosch's visual forms are symbols that can be explained through recourse to esoteric knowledge, which was part of Bosch's historical horizon but which is unknown to us today. As a consequence, the literature is characterized by attempts to explain his imagery in terms of astrology, alchemy, rare forms of heresy, illustrated puns, and so forth.²

There are, of course, notable exceptions to this rule. Interestingly enough, such approaches tend to favor a broader understanding of the cultural significance and social function of his art.³ Paul Vandebroek, for example, has recently provided us with an analysis of the social values manifested in Bosch's subject matter, thus affording us insight into his role as a member of a new, humanistically educated elite.⁴ He shows that such paintings as *The Ship of Fools*, *The Cure of Folly*, *The Death of the Miser*, and *The Haywain Triptych* not only manifest the secular morality of this group, but that these moral values were used to distinguish their own from the cultures of other classes. Another of Vandebroek's contributions is his discussion of Renaissance art theory in relation to Bosch's visual imagery. He argues, however, that while Bosch made use of concepts such as invention, fantasy, and genius in the elaboration of an apparently hermetic art, his work was nevertheless capable of being deciphered by a humanistically trained elite. The hermetic quality of Bosch's work is thus interpreted as a device by which meaning could be hidden from those who were regarded as socially (and morally) inferior. Vandebroek writes:

His work may be accounted for down to the smallest detail, as Bax has demonstrated and maintained against all other interpreters. Bosch is a pseudo-visionary (a concept which we have used without pejorative connotations), who sought the greatest possible control over the thought, that is to say the subject-like *inventio* which was the basis for his visual imagery.⁵

This interpretation is confirmed in his most recent essay on *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, in which meaning is ascribed to every aspect of the pictorial fabric.⁶

In what follows, I will suggest that while the function of Bosch's paintings may very well have served the moral and social purposes ascribed to them by Vandebroek, his visual motifs did not possess the specific meanings that he and others have attributed to them. In other words, I will argue that, far from being "accounted for down to the smallest detail," Bosch's imagery was to a large extent incapable of

being read and that it was this very quality that enhanced its appeal for a humanistically educated audience. In place of the pictorial *symbol*, I would substitute the pictorial *sign*. Rather than attempt to ascribe to Bosch's pictorial motifs symbolic or allegorical status, that is, to claim that the work's material substance refers to an ideal substructure that is fixed, separate, and distinct, I will think of them as signs in which both material and ideal qualities are indissolubly united. In doing so, I want to draw attention not to the depths of meaning that are said to lie behind Bosch's forms but to the surfaces they animate. Rather than look through the work, I suggest we examine the way in which it resists our gaze. Instead of valuing transparency, the way in which many interpreters have claimed that the paintings afford us access to an intellectual realm behind the surface, I should like to emphasize their opacity—the way in which his paintings insist that the interpreter create meaning before them. As a contrast to Panofsky's model of historical scholarship as an enterprise dedicated to the discovery of secrets and the penetration of sealed chambers, I should like to quote Michel Foucault:

The contemporary critic is abandoning the great myth of interiority: . . . He finds himself totally displaced from the old themes of locked enclosures, of the treasure in the box that he habitually sought in the depths of the work's container. Placing himself at the exterior of the text, he constitutes a new exterior for it, writing texts out of texts.⁷

By using the notion of the sign, I wish not only to draw attention to the way in which the signifying systems of the past can only be interpreted in light of the signifying systems of the present, but also to suggest that both those of the past and those of the present are ideologically informed. Rather than define the sign as something that draws its meaning from all the other units that constitute the system of which it is a part, as for example, in Saussure's definition of the word's relation to language⁸—a strategy that serves to abstract signification from its cultural and social circumstances—I wish to use a notion of the sign developed in the Soviet reaction to Saussure, namely that used by Valentin Volosinov and Mikhail Bakhtin.⁹ According to this view, signs are not part of an abstract, timeless system but are conceived of as engaged in specific social and cultural transactions. Instead of defining their significance by means of their relation to all the other elements of the system to which they belong, as in the structural semiotics of Saussure, signs obtain their meaning from the specificity of the circumstances of their use.

To suggest that signs can be ascribed specific meaning is not, of course, to suggest that they are univocal. Far from implying that the interpreter can ever arrive at the "true" significance of the sign systems of the past, a recognition that signs are defined by their social and historical location implies that every interpretation is itself constituted by sign systems that have their own social and historical specificity. In other words, an understanding of the signifying processes of the past involves a recognition that the work of the interpreter is also a signifying process and that both the signs of the past and the signs of the present are colored and compromised by the circumstances of their production.¹⁰

If Bosch's visual imagery is to be understood in terms of signs as defined above, then it will be important to locate them within the other signifying systems that constituted the culture in which he worked. Insofar as this analysis is indebted to the historicist assumption that events are shaped by the historical context in which they take place, then it will be important to ascertain the ways in which the signs that articulate his work intersected with the rest of the sign systems that organized the social and historical circumstances of their creation. That is, like those interpretations that depend upon astrology, alchemy, heresy, or the identification of puns, this interpretation will have to move beyond the boundaries of the picture plane into the culture that surrounded it. Rather than penetrating the image so as to see through its forms to intellectual traditions they allegedly symbolized or embodied, this analysis will attempt to move across their surfaces to examine the conventional and thus social sign systems with which they are both contiguous and continuous. Instead of regarding the image as a finished product, that is, as a reflection of intellectual activity taking place in another sphere, the image will be regarded as part of a social process. Instead of occupying a passive place in the life of culture, it will be regarded as an active participant.

Norman Bryson has pointed out that there is nothing self-evident about the choice of circumstances the historian adduces in an attempt to build a causal narrative about his or her subject.¹¹ Bosch's imagery must have served a variety of different functions for those who originally experienced it. Since matters relating to class will figure prominently in the narrative I propose to tell, however, the context I have deemed relevant is concerned with the role played by Bosch's works in the artistic collections of the Burgundian nobility of his time. What little information we have concerning the early patronage of Bosch's art suggests that his paintings were collected by members of the aristocracy, espe-



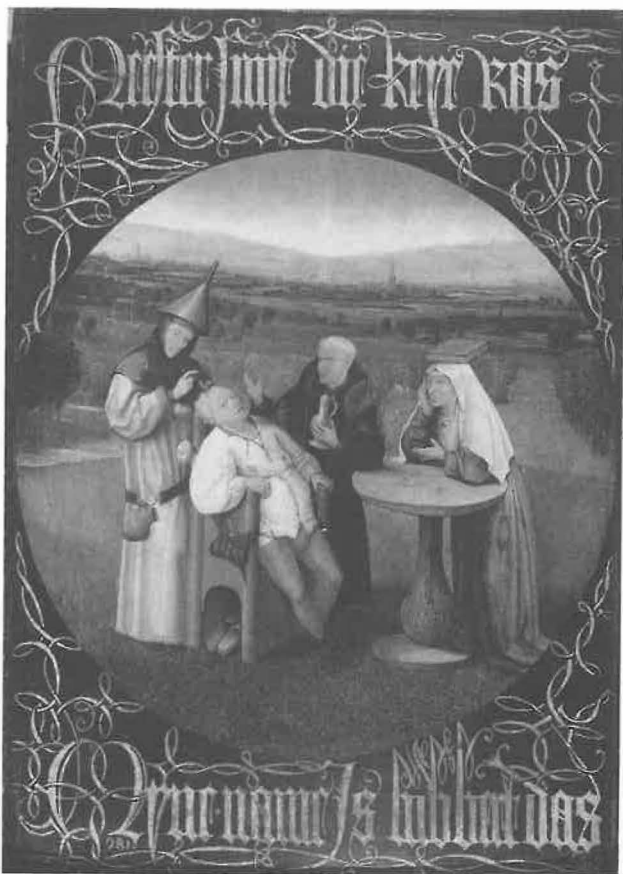
1. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.

cially by those who had been most affected by the introduction of humanist culture. Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (fig. 1), for example, was almost certainly commissioned by Henry III of Nassau, advisor and chamberlain to the reigning duke Phillip the Handsome.¹² According to Antonio de Beatis, an Italian who traveled in the Netherlands in 1516–1517, the *Garden* hung in the Brussels palace of the counts of Nassau in the company of a painting representing Hercules and Dejanira, in which the figures were depicted nude. Gombrich has plausibly suggested that this painting may be identified with a work by Jan Gossaert, which is now in the Barber Institute in Birmingham (fig. 2). Bosch's work was thus included in a collection that had been decisively marked by the humanist taste of the Italian Renaissance.¹³ The pictorial conventions or signs with which Gossaert has constructed this cultural representation are deeply indebted to the Italianizing art of Albrecht Dürer. It was through Dürer's absorption of the canon of anatomical proportions codified in antiquity by Vitruvius and revived in the Renaissance by artists such as Leonardo that Gossaert could present his figures as representative of the pictorial ideals of humanist culture.¹⁴ On the other hand, the erotic intimacy that characterizes the mythological couple is typical of the way in which such subjects were handled by Netherlandish artists in the early years of the sixteenth century.¹⁵



2. Jan Gossaert, *Hercules and Dejanira*. Birmingham, courtesy The Barber Institute, University of Birmingham.

The collection of paintings assembled by Henry III's third wife, the Spanish princess Mencia de Mendoza, after Henry's death, was consistent with the taste I have just described. That is, she included works by Bosch in a group of works executed largely by Italianizing artists. Shortly before her departure for Spain in 1539, she instructed her agents to buy at least one work by Bosch, a version of one of his best-known paintings, *The Haywain Triptych*.¹⁶ Inventories of her collection taken in 1548 and after her death in 1554 reveal that there were several other



3. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Cure of Folly*. Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.

works ascribed to Bosch in her possession. Bosch's paintings would thus have formed part of a collection that included Jan Gossaert, Bernard van Orley, Jan Vermeyen, Jan van Scorel, and Maarten van Heemskerck, all leading exponents of the Italianizing tendency in Netherlandish painting during this period.¹⁷

Henry III and Mencia de Mendoza appear to have been the rule rather than the exception among those who first collected works by Bosch. A version of *The Cure of Folly* (fig. 3) once hung in the dining room of Phillip of Burgundy's palace at Duurstede in 1524. Like *The Garden of*

Earthly Delights, it shared the walls with three large paintings of nudes, probably representing mythological subjects. J. J. Sterk has proposed that one of these paintings may have been a lost work by Jan Gossaert representing Hercules and Antaeus, which is known from a copy now in a private collection in Germany.¹⁸ Phillip of Burgundy, an illegitimate son of Phillip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, had filled important positions of state before becoming bishop of Utrecht in 1517. His humanist interests are well documented. His court poet, Gerrit Geldenhauer, who wrote a biography of Phillip, tells us that his patron studied painting and goldsmiths' work as a youth and that his conversation revealed an intimate knowledge of the work of the ancient theorist Vitruvius. Phillip was also the patron of the artist Jan Gossaert, whom he took with him on a diplomatic mission to Rome in 1508. He employed both Gossaert and Jacopo de Barbari, a Venetian painter and theorist, in the decoration of his palace at Souburg. The interest of both of these artists in Italian Renaissance art theory is evident in Gossaert's painting of Neptune and Amphitrite (fig. 4), in which the figures are constructed in accordance with the Vitruvian canon of human proportions.¹⁹

What was it that made Bosch's visual imagery so attractive to a humanist audience? How did the sign systems that constitute the surface of his works intersect with the sign systems that organized and structured the humanist culture of an aristocratic elite? What access do we have to the taste that enabled this class to appreciate representations of ideal nudes and the world of imagination that we appear to find in the works of Bosch? This point in our narrative marks a shift from the analysis of Bosch's patronage to an analysis of the intellectual culture to which that patronage subscribed. One of the means of obtaining access to the aesthetic values of Bosch's original audience is to examine their ideas about the nature and function of artistic products. Many of their ideas on such matters must have been shaped by what they knew about the theory of art, in this case the humanist theory of the Italian Renaissance. A way into our topic is afforded by a piece of art criticism by Antonio de Beatis, whom we have mentioned earlier. Beatis included the following in his description of his visit to the palace of Henry III of Nassau:

And then there are some panels on which bizarre things have been painted. Here seas, skies, woods, meadows and many other things are represented, such as those [figures] that emerge from a shell, others that defecate cranes, men and women, whites and blacks in different activities and poses. Birds,



4. Jan Gossaert, *Neptune and Amphitrite*. Berlin, courtesy Staatliche Museen.

animals of all kinds, executed very naturally, things that are so delightful and fantastic that it is impossible to describe them properly to those who have not seen them.²⁰

It is remarkable that Beatis should have focused not on the way in which Bosch's visual motifs carried symbolic meaning, nor even on the allegorical significance of the work, but that he should have emphasized the way in which these motifs drew attention to the artist's powers of invention and fantasy. Most telling of all is his admission that he cannot find words to describe the painting adequately to those who have not seen it themselves. By remarking on the way in which visual and linguistic signification differ, Beatis suggests the way in which Bosch's pictorial signs establish the singularity of their author.

The notion of fantasy, already present in Beatis's account, becomes central in that written by a Spanish scholar at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Drawing an elaborate analogy between poetic and artistic creation based on Horace's dictum *ut pictura poesis* (as in painting, so in poetry), Jose de Siguenza argued that Bosch sought to distinguish himself from his great contemporaries, Dürer, Michelangelo, and Raphael by means of the strategy adopted by Teofilo Folengo, the "macaronic" (or satiric) poet of the Italian Renaissance.²¹ According to Siguenza, Folengo had created a highly personal, idiosyncratic style in order to set himself apart from his great predecessors Virgil, Terence, Seneca, and Horace.

Hieronymus Bosch certainly wished to resemble this poet, not because he knew him (for, as I believe, he painted his fantasies before him), but because the same thinking and the same motive impelled him: he knew that he had great gifts for painting and that in regard to a large part of his works he had been considered a painter who ranked below Durer, Michelangelo, Raphael (Urbino) and others, and so he struck out on a new road, on which he left all others behind him, and turned his eye on everything: a style of painting satirical and macaronic, devoting much skill and many curiosities to his fantasies, both in innovation and execution and often proved how able he was in his art . . . when he spoke seriously.²²

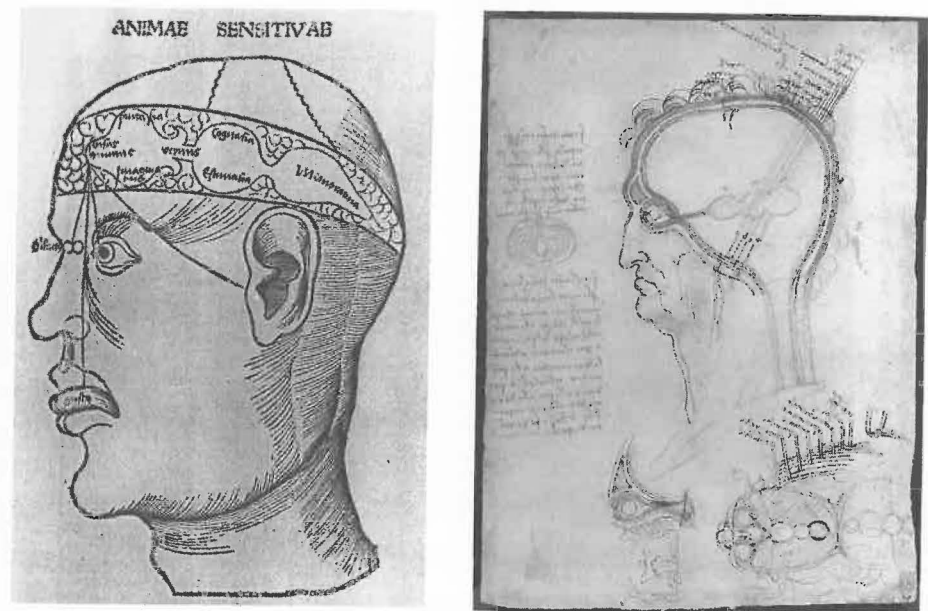
The value attached to fantasy in the criticism of Beatis and Siguenza, together with its justification by the latter using the notion of *ut pictura poesis*, is a characteristic of Italian Renaissance art theory of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Beginning with Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'arte* of about 1400, Italian art theorists had extolled the values of

fantasy and artistic license as a means of claiming a more exalted status for the artist. Cennini claims that painting

... deserves to be placed in the next rank to science and to be crowned with poetry. The justice lies in this: that the poet is free to compose and bind together or not as he pleases, according to his will. In the same way the painter is given freedom to compose a figure standing, sitting, half man, half horse, as it pleases him, following his *fantasia*.²³

Undoubtedly the greatest claims for the importance of fantasy in artistic creation were made by Leonardo da Vinci. An aspect of his thinking on the subject is found in his equation of fantasy and reason in a personal adaptation of Aristotelian faculty psychology. According to Aristotle, whose views had dominated psychological theory during the Middle Ages, fantasy was located in the foremost ventricle of the brain and thus separated from the operations of reason, which were thought to be located in the central ventricle. Aristotle's theory is clearly illustrated in a woodcut from Georg Reisch's encyclopedia, the *Margarita philosophica* (*The Philosophical Pearl*), which appeared in Freiburg in 1503 (fig. 5).²⁴ According to the woodcut, fantasy is found in the foremost ventricle, reason in the central one, and memory in the third ventricle at the back of the brain. Leonardo, on the other hand, in a drawing of about 1489 (fig. 6), which Kemp identified as an illustration of psychological theory rather than an anatomical study of the skull, placed fantasy in the central ventricle so that it was linked to reason. In doing so, he associated fantasy with what had traditionally been regarded as the most privileged activity of the brain. Leonardo's view of the importance of fantasy was accompanied by extraordinary claims to artistic license, claims that had profound implications for the social status of the artist. He wrote, for example, "The divinity which is in the science of painting transmutes itself into a resemblance of the divine mind in such a manner that it discourses with free power concerning the generation of the diverse essences of various plants, animals and so on."²⁵

The importance ascribed to fantasy as the basis for artistic license by humanist art theory was not confined to Italy. Both patrons and artists north of the Alps appear to have recognized that its implications had the potential to transform their relationship. The importance of fantasy can also be demonstrated in the career of Bosch's contemporary, Albrecht Dürer. Dürer, whose theoretical writings and artistic practice are both deeply indebted to Leonardo, seems to have been aware of the



5. Left, Anonymous, *Ventricles of the Brain*, woodcut. From Georg Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, Freiburg, 1503. Photo from Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator* 8 (1977): 347–98, fig. 4. Reprinted with permission of the Regents of the University of California.

6. Right, Leonardo da Vinci, *Ventricles of the Brain*, Windsor, courtesy of the Royal Library, Windsor Castle.

latter's claims concerning the divine nature of artistic creation. Though his *Self-Portrait* of 1500 (fig. 7), whose format is thought to have been derived from fifteenth-century representations of the "Holy Face" of Christ (fig. 8), may have made reference to the notion of the *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ), it can also be regarded as a self-conscious assertion of the analogy between divine and artistic creation.²⁶ In a draft to the introduction of his treatise on painting, written in 1512, Dürer wrote:

Many centuries ago the great art of painting was held in high honour by mighty kings, and they made excellent artists rich and held them worthy,



7. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait*. Munich, courtesy Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.



8. Jan van Eyck (copy), *Holy Face of Christ*. Munich, courtesy Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.

accounting such inventiveness a creating power like God's. For the imagination of the good painter is full of figures, and were it possible for him to live forever he would always have from his inward "ideas," whereof Plato speaks, something new to set forth by the work of his hand.²⁷

In this passage Dürer explicitly equates the divine-like quality of artistic creation with the need for social recognition. The situation that existed in the past, the honor paid to artists by royalty, is clearly invoked as a model for the present.

Another artist working in Germany (prior to his journey to the Netherlands), the Venetian, Jacopo de Barbari, composed an appeal to his patron Frederick the Wise of Saxony for the recognition of painting as the eighth liberal art.²⁸ Barbari argued that, far from being a mechanical art, painting presupposed a knowledge of all the other liberal arts. In addition, the artist not only imitated nature but had the capacity to reproduce nature, a creative activity without parallel among the rest of the arts.²⁹ He concludes:

... from which most illustrious prince, elector of the Roman Empire, you can contemplate in these few precepts the excellence of painting which, in an inanimate nature, makes visible that which nature creates as palpable and visible. And one can deservedly seat painting among the liberal arts, as the most important of them. For when men have investigated the nature of things in their number and in their character, they still have not been able to create them. It is to this creation that painting is so suited that it deserves its freedom.³⁰

It would appear that such views were expressed by Barbari wherever he went. After leaving Germany, Barbari worked first for Phillip of Burgundy (1509) and later for Margaret of Austria, regentess of the Netherlands. J. J. Sterk has discerned Barbari's teaching in a poem by Phillip's court poet and biographer, Gerrit Geldenhauer. In a Latin poem in praise of painting written in 1515, Geldenhauer praises the painter for his ability to reproduce nature as well as to create naturalistic depictions of historical and mythological narratives. Like Barbari, Geldenhauer suggests that these qualities deserve the recognition of rulers.³¹ The career of Jacopo de Barbari thus enables us to reconstruct at least one avenue by which the new humanist ideas concerning artistic license and its implications for the status of the artist, which were first developed in fifteenth-century Italy, were disseminated among artists and patrons living in the Netherlands.

The realization that notions of fantasy and artistic license played a role in the aesthetic values of the humanistic elite for which Bosch worked does not immediately help us understand the significance his art had for them. After all, the rising importance of the notion of fantasy in Renaissance art theory was not directly related to the development of non-mimetic imagery of the kind we associate with Hieronymus Bosch. The role of fantasy in artistic creation as envisioned by Leonardo and Dürer, for example, had nothing to do with departing from the principles of mimesis. Fantasy enabled the artist to depart from nature, in the sense of reproducing or creating nature, rather than to neglect or defy it. However, while fantasy and mimesis were regarded as completely congruent concepts, fantasy could also be invoked as a means of accounting for imagery that deliberately broke the rules of resemblance.³² Interestingly enough, such justifications of non-mimetic imagery were also undertaken in terms of *ut pictura poesis*. For example, the popularity in Renaissance Italy of the non-mimetic decorative ornaments known as "grotesques," a type of ornament based on Roman wall decorations

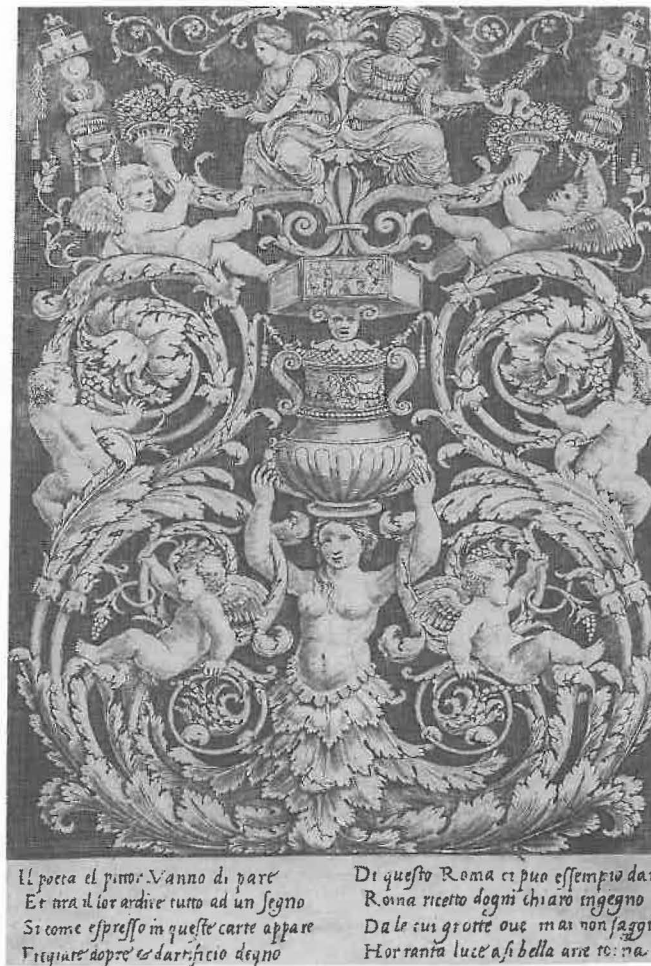
discovered during the excavation of the Golden House of Nero in the late fifteenth century, was justified in terms of artistic license.³³ An engraving by the anonymous Italian Master of the Die (fig. 9), dating from the early sixteenth century, is accompanied by the following text:

Poet and Painter as companions meet
Because their strivings have a common passion
As you can see expressed in this sheet
Adorned with friezes in this skilful fashion.

Of this, Rome can the best examples give
Rome toward which all subtle minds are leading
When now from grottoes where no people live
So much new light of this fine art is spreading.³⁴

When the subject of the new fashion for “grotesques” was raised during Francisco de Holanda’s discussions with Michelangelo, Michelangelo is said to have defended them by expressly quoting Horace:

In this sentence he [Horace] does in no way blame painters but praises and favours them since he says that poets and painters have license to dare to do, I say to dare . . . what they choose. And this insight and power they have always had; for whenever (as rarely happens) a painter makes a work that seems false and deceitful . . . , this falseness is truth; and greater truth in that place would be a lie. For he will not paint a man’s hand with ten fingers, nor paint a horse with the ears of a bull or a camel’s hump; nor will he paint the foot of an elephant with the same feeling as the foot of a horse, nor the arm or face of a child like those of an old man; nor an eye nor an ear even half an inch out of its proper place; nor even the hidden vein of an arm may he place where he will; for all such things are false. But if, in order to observe what is proper to a time and place . . . , he change the parts of limbs (as in grotesque work . . . , which would otherwise be without grace and most false) and convert a griffin or a deer downward into a dolphin or upward into any shape he may choose, putting wings in the place of arms, and cutting away the arms as if wings are better, this converted limb, of lion or horse or bird will be most perfect according to its kind . . . ; and this may seem false but can really only be called well invented or monstrous. . . . And sometimes it is more in accordance with reason to paint a monstrosity (for the variation and relaxation of the sense and in respect of mortal eyes, that sometimes desire to see that which they never see and think cannot exist) rather than the accustomed figure (admirable though it be) of men and animals.³⁵



9. Master of the Die, *Grotesque Ornament*, engraving. New York, courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.62).

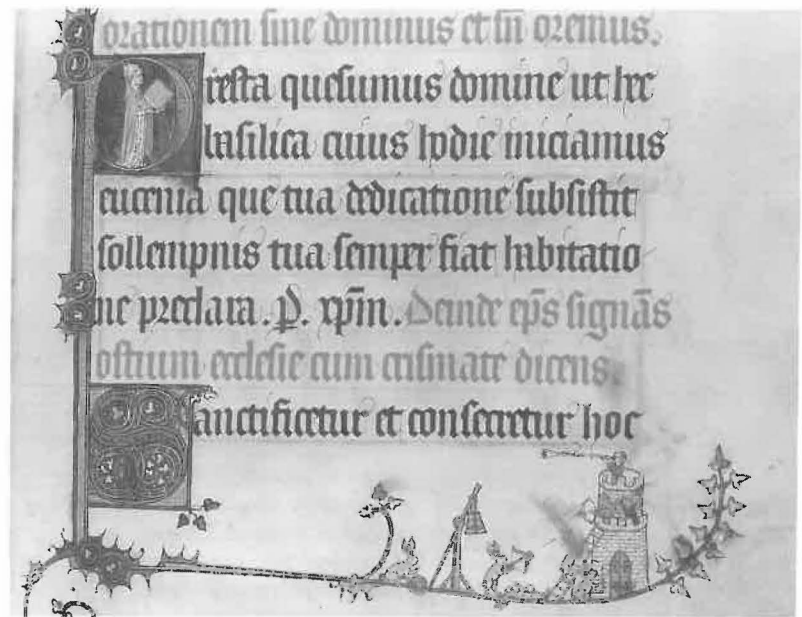
What is important in this discussion of the justification of the fashion for grotesques in terms of *ut pictura poesis*, is not the grotesques themselves, since there is little likelihood that Bosch could have known them and they bear no resemblance to his own pictorial forms. It lies rather in the way in which a non-mimetic tradition of representation was justified

in terms of the artist's license, his right to the untrammelled exercise of his fantasy.

The inspiration for Bosch's own non-mimetic vocabulary would appear to lie in the fantastic forms traditionally used in the decoration of ecclesiastical architecture and furniture, objects of decorative art, and the margins of illuminated manuscripts. Before suggesting some of the ways in which Bosch may have used these forms to his own ends, we must first of all examine their original function and significance within the cultural and social context in which they were produced. The apparently frivolous quality of these imaginative forms, which appear to bear no relation to the religious function of the buildings, objects, and books in which they are so often found, proved deeply offensive to medieval moralists. The well-known letter of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, written in the twelfth century, affords us an account of their "beautiful depravity," while condemning them as useless fancies:

But in the cloister, before the eyes of penitent brethren, what is that ridiculous pageant of monstrosities, that beauty of ugliness doing? What place is there for dirty monkeys, for ferocious lions, for monstrous centaurs, for half-men, for spotted tigers, for fighting soldiers, for huntsmen winding their horns? You may see there a number of bodies with a single head, or again many heads upon a single body. Here a four footed beast is seen with a serpent's tail, there the head of a quadruped upon a fish. Here a beast whose forepart is a horse and it drags half a goat after it: there is a horned creature with the hind quarters of a horse. So copious, in short, and so strange a variety of diverse forms is to be seen that it is more attractive to peruse the marbles than the books, and to spend the whole day gazing at them rather than meditating on the Law of God. In God's name! if men are not ashamed of the folly of it, why do they not at least smart at the thought of the cost?³⁶

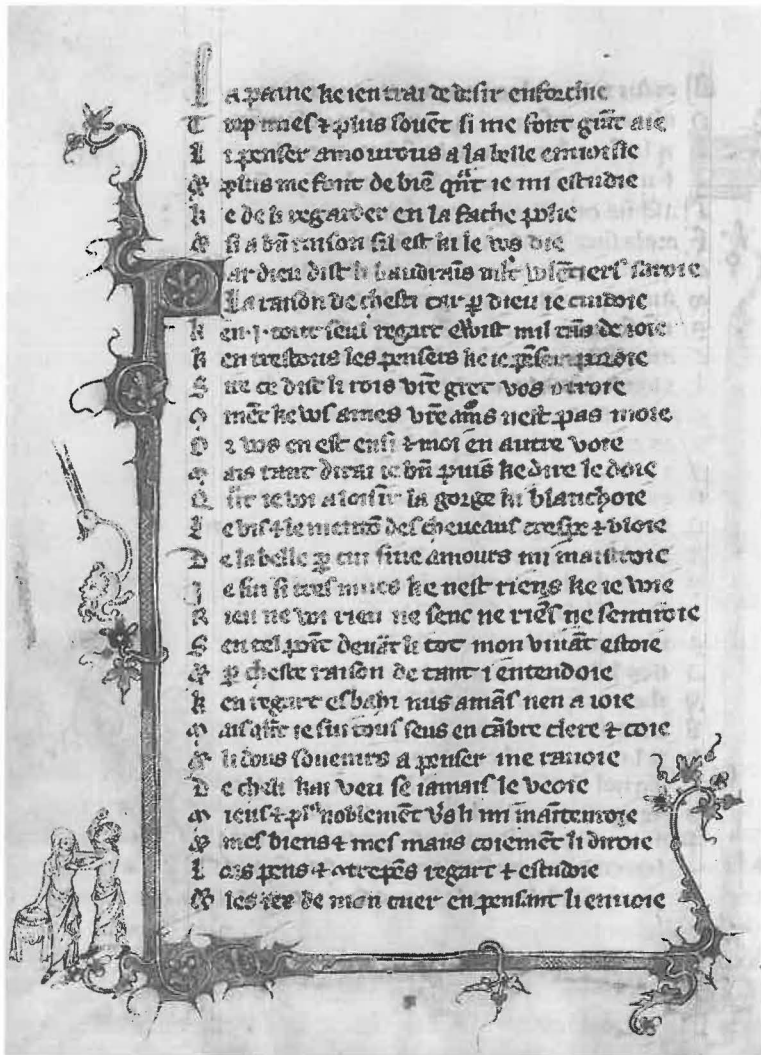
Scholars of illuminated manuscripts, the art form from which, as we shall see, it is most likely that Bosch derived his ideas, have proposed that these motifs often constituted a satirical and/or entertaining form of humor.³⁷ Many of the themes depend upon the notion of the "world upside down"; that is, they satirize classes, occupations, and the sexes by inverting the relationships in which they usually stand in society. Among the favorite targets of the illuminators are the aristocracy and the clergy. For example, chivalric ideals are disparaged when knights are shown attacked by hares (fig. 10), and the clergy is mocked when its ecclesiastical activities are performed by apes. Alternatively, knights are



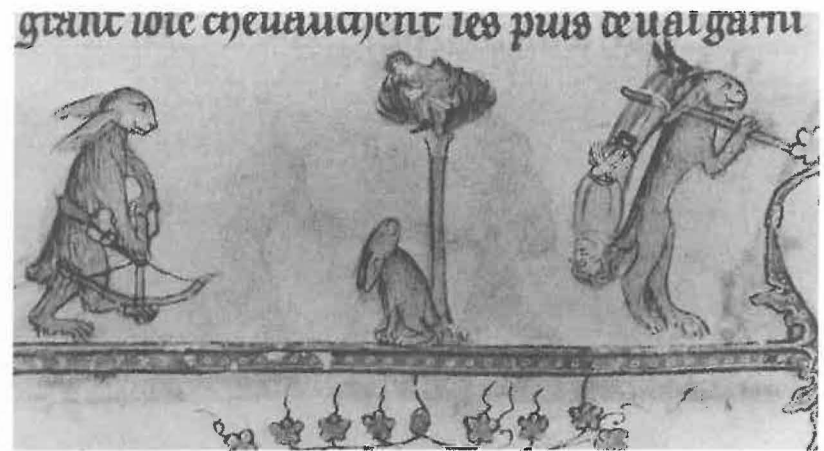
10. Anonymous, "Men Defending Castle against Hares," *Metz Pontifical*, mss. 298, f. 41. Photo copyright Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

defeated by women in jousts, and clerics are seduced by nuns. Dominant women are frequently satirized in representations of marital strife; one of the favorite themes being the "battle for the pants," which, then as now, seemed to metaphorize the issue of sexual control in marriage (fig. 11). Other images are more entertaining than satiric and depend on the inversion of relationships in nature. In such scenes, rabbits execute dogs or hunt human beings (fig. 12).³⁸ An important dimension of this marginal imagery is made up of monsters or hybrids composed of various combinations of human and animal forms.³⁹ Such monsters engage in improbable activities that mimic forms of human activity or demonstrate the limitations of their own curious forms (fig. 13).

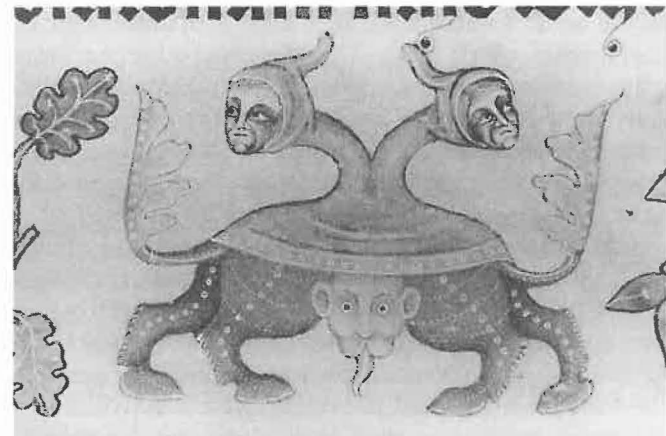
Bosch's knowledge of the fantastic imagery of the manuscript margins was, in all likelihood, a personal one. Not only have direct borrowings from manuscripts been documented in his work, but recent scholarship suggests that he was trained as a manuscript illuminator rather than as a panel painter.⁴⁰ Far from suggesting that Bosch used the images of the manuscript margins as a source from which he borrowed to create his



11. Anonymous, "Battle for the Pants," *Voeux du Paon*, ms. 24, f. 6v. New York, Glazier Collection, courtesy Pierpont Morgan Library.



12. Anonymous, "Man Hunted by Hare," *Romance of Alexander*, ms. 264, f. 81v. Oxford, Bodleian Library. Reproduced from Lillian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966, fig. 356. Reprinted with permission of the Regents of the University of California.



13. Anonymous, "Double-headed Monster Fighting," *Luttrell Psalter*, ms. Add 42130, f. 211. London, British Museum. Reproduced from Eric Millar, *The Luttrell Psalter*, London, British Museum, 1932, fig. 151b.

own images, as has previously been claimed, I would argue that Bosch transformed the earlier tradition by means of an imaginative reworking of its principles on the basis of *ut pictura poesis*. It is my argument that Bosch used the satirical and entertainment value of the notion of the “world upside down,” as well as of fabricated monsters, in order to demonstrate the humanist artist’s new claim to artistic freedom.⁴¹

An example of his use of the principle of inversion, in this case one that is well known in the manuscript margins, is his reversal of natural relations of scale. In the landscape of the central panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, humans are often dwarfed by birds and animals as well as by fruits and other vegetation. The magnificent, brilliantly hued birds in the pool in the middle distance are many times the size of the humans who ride on their backs.⁴² Not only are the birds larger than human beings but the inversion of the usual relationship is dramatized in that, here, birds feed humans rather than vice versa. The intense naturalism that characterizes Bosch’s depiction of these birds may also have its sources in the manuscript margins. During the course of the fifteenth century, the satiric and humorous non-mimetic world of the manuscript margins was transformed by the introduction of *trompe l’oeil* borders, in which the manuscript text was surrounded by meticulously described objects from the real world.⁴³ While the earlier traditions did not entirely die out, the borders were increasingly filled with illusionistic representations of flowers, jewels, peacock feathers, and other precious objects. Fruits, like birds, also find their relation to humans dramatically altered. The fruits of the central panel are described with a marked attention to their luscious shapes and glossy surfaces. The scene contains giant raspberries and strawberries and cherries, from which many human beings can eat at the same time. The delectable quality of the fruits and their effect on the people that animate the landscape, many of whom feed off them voraciously, adds to the air of sensual enjoyment that characterizes the scene.

Apparently, Bosch’s appreciation of the subversive potential of these “world upside down” reversals, the way in which, for example, inversions of scale might be used to marginalize the activities of humans by centralizing the presence of birds and fruit, thus suggesting that the former are captive to their sensual desires, enabled him to extend the principle so as to organize certain sections of the composition and even to plan the central panel as a whole. For example, Walter Gibson has proposed that the beautiful, nude young women who occupy the pool in the center of the central panel (fig. 14), and who seem to have attracted



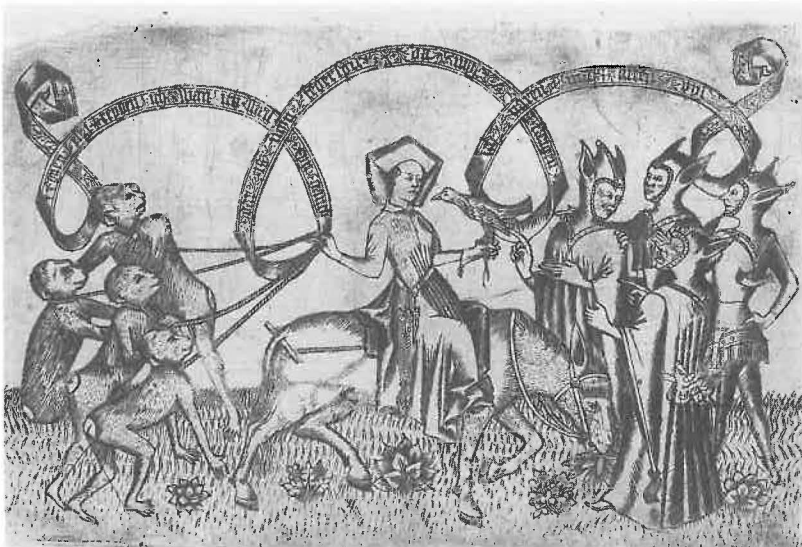
14. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail). Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.

the attention of a cavalcade of gesticulating male riders, might be a reference to the misogynist idea of the “power of women”—according to which women were held responsible for male lust.⁴⁴

This popular idea is more clearly enunciated in an allegory by an anonymous German engraver dating from the middle of the fifteenth century (fig. 15). A banderole above the woman’s head reads,

I ride a donkey whenever I want
A cuckoo is my lure
With it I catch many fools and monkeys.⁴⁵

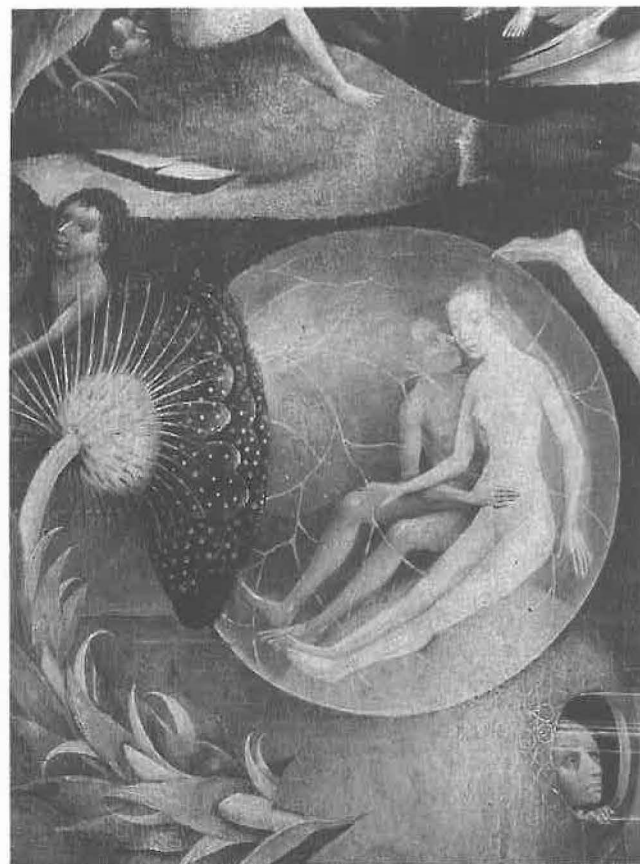
The sense of the image depends on the equation of lust and folly, for the German words *esel* for donkey, *gauch* for cuckoo, and *affe* for ape all carried the secondary connotation “fool.” The significance of this equation carried special moral opprobrium in an age when the concept of folly was closely linked with that of sin. The “power of women” idea may also be contained in one of the most striking images of the central panel, the couple encased in a bubble (fig. 16). The woman is the most



15. Master of the Power of Women, *Allegory of the Power of Women*, engraving. Munich, courtesy Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

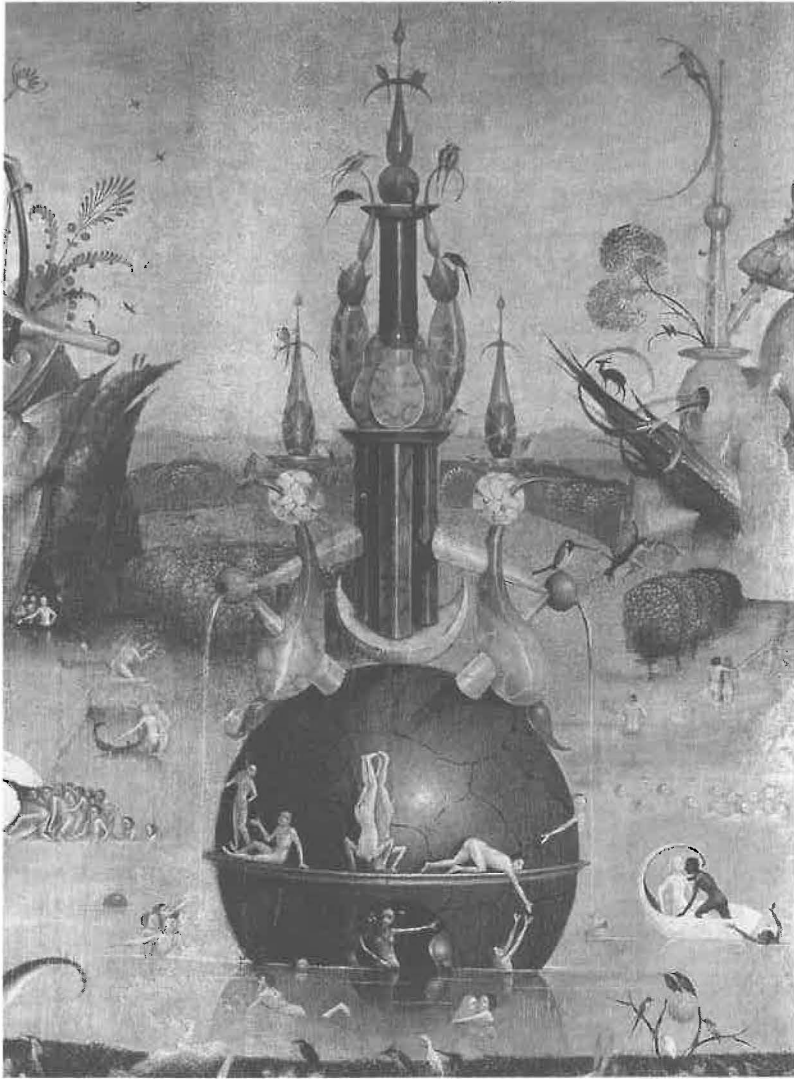
prominent of the nude pair, not only because of her placement and size but because of the pallor of her skin. She appears as the lure that has attracted the attentions of the man beside her. While comment on the transitory and evanescent nature of sexual pleasure may be found in the fragility of the bubble in which the scene unfolds, it also seems to be implied by the nude figure standing on his head immediately to the right. This figure, whose gesture serves to display rather than to hide his genitals, may, as we have seen, constitute a reference to the idea of the “world upside down.”

Gibson also drew attention to the way in which the springtime lovelessness of the central panel echoes literary and pictorial representations of the “Garden of Love”—a theme whose inspiration lay in the literary tradition initiated by the *Roman de la Rose*.⁴⁶ The characterization of this garden as one of sensual delectation contrasts markedly with the sober mood of the garden of Paradise in the left wing with which it bears a striking similarity. Both landscapes, for example, have a fountain at the center from which four channels of water flow. Their structural similarity appears deliberately ironic, for the significance of the biblical story in one directly contradicts the sensual abandon of the other. In one, the



16. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail). Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.

marriage of Adam and Eve is enacted for the sole purpose of human procreation; in the other, sexual ecstasy takes place in the absence of children.⁴⁷ This interpretation gains strength when it is associated with an incident taking place at the center of the fountain in the central panel (fig. 17), in which a man touches a woman suggestively while another woman bends down so as to present her buttocks to the spectator. This scene takes place in the vicinity of a nude man standing on his head. The use of such a figure to convey the idea of the “world upside down” is not unknown in this period. A German engraver known as the Housebook



17. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail). Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.



18. The Housebook Master, *Parodic Coat of Arms*, engraving. Amsterdam, courtesy Rijksprentenkabinet.

Master, who worked on the Middle Rhine in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, used just such a figure at the center of a parodic coat of arms (fig. 18).⁴⁸ The crest of this coat of arms illustrates the theme of the henpecked husband, a peasant who is forced to carry his wife on his back. Such themes, a commonplace of late medieval art, constitute a satire of sexual relations in which the "natural" hierarchy of male domination was not observed. The juxtaposition of this figure with the

sexually explicit group at the center of the fountain suggests that such activities are to be condemned and rejected.

The right wing and its Hell scene offer us another series of inversions. Here, musical instruments, usually a source of entertainment and sensual enjoyment, are transformed into instruments of torture (fig. 19). One figure is stretched across the strings of an enormous harp, while others are forced into choral singing led by a monster who reads music that has been tattooed onto the behind of one of the unfortunates in his power. Another figure, imprisoned in a drum, is deafened by the monster who beats it, while a third, tied to a flute, has had another flute inserted in his anus. In the foreground, a pretty young woman is offered an image of herself in a mirror supported on a monster's behind, the vain satisfaction she may have taken from her reflection being sabotaged not only by its source but by the amorous attentions of a hideous black monster who fulfills the role of a male lover. Finally, a scene that not only manifests the principle of inversion but almost quotes the imagery of the manuscript margins: Striding across the foreground is a hare blowing a hunting horn, who carries a human being on the spear he carries over his shoulder.⁴⁹

What are the implications of Bosch's choice of the manuscript margins and the inversions of the world upside down for the cultural context in which he worked? By making use of the traditions of manuscript illumination, Bosch turned to an art form that had been traditionally associated with the aristocracy. There was, in the Middle Ages, no other social group that could undertake the enormous expense involved in the production of these sumptuous objects of display. It is perhaps not irrelevant to our discussion that Engelbert II of Nassau, father of Henry III who, as we have seen, was in all likelihood the first owner of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, collected these precious books and commissioned one of the most spectacular examples produced in the fifteenth century.⁵⁰ It is significant that the satirical humor of the "world upside down" flourished in an aristocratic milieu. As anthropologists and historians have so often pointed out, the social function of rituals and other expressions of this idea is to demonstrate the need for order.⁵¹ The satire of chivalric attitudes or of the role of the clergy could only take place in a context within which such questioning did not constitute a real challenge to the status quo. Indeed, it could be argued that the importance of the manuscript margins in books that include chivalric romance, on the one hand, and missals, psalters, and prayerbooks, on the other, lies



19. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (detail). Madrid, courtesy Museo del Prado.

in the way in which they supported and reinforced the assumptions of the classes and occupations of those who commissioned them.⁵²

The significance of Bosch's use of the theme of the "world upside down" may be expanded if we recognize it as a manifestation of the way in which a culture affirms and sustains its values by distinguishing itself from a realm of chaos or nonculture. According to the cultural theory developed by Boris Uspenskii, Juri Lotman, and others of the Tartu of Soviet semiotics in the 1960s, culture and nonculture stand in a structural relation to one another:

The mechanism of culture is a system which transforms the outer sphere into the inner one: disorganization into organization. . . . By virtue of the fact that culture lives not only by the opposition of the outer and inner spheres but also by moving from one sphere to the other, it does not only struggle against the outer "chaos" but has need of it as well; it does not only destroy it but it continually creates it.⁵³

The mechanism of turning the world upside down, of moving the culturally repressed into a position of cultural dominance, can also serve as a way in which cultural boundaries are redefined. In Bosch's case, this translation of the topsy-turvy world of the manuscript margins into the center of the image, the elevation of visual themes and motifs whose subversive potential relegated them to the periphery, represented a dramatic expansion of the high culture of his time. The movement from the margins to the center may thus be viewed as not only a momentary aberration whose anomaly serves to reinforce the values of the status quo, but also as a means by which high culture could realign its boundaries so as to include within its parameters motifs that had previously been excluded.

This perspective on Bosch's art seems particularly relevant in light of the long-lasting impact of his work on Netherlandish painting.⁵⁴ It has, for example, been possible to trace a series of artists working in a Boschian vein until well into the third quarter of the sixteenth century, a series that includes some of the best-known artists of the period, including Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In the field of twentieth-century art, the appropriation of elements considered beyond the realm of official culture has been interpreted as one of the most important strategies of the avant garde.⁵⁵ Thomas Crow has argued that the avant garde has repeatedly turned to the world of popular culture in search of artistic inspiration. He claims that it is by means of these appropriations, these

transformations of nonculture into culture, that the avant garde has legitimated its status and function as a source of cultural production. The analogy between the artistic practice of the avant garde and those of Hieronymus Bosch is a striking one. In Bosch's case, it seems that the transformation of nonculture into culture was the means by which he could establish himself as a unique and distinctive talent. The appropriation of the "world upside down" was thus part of the process of "making genius."

In moving the "world upside down" from the margins to the center, Bosch did more than make use of a cultural trope that was well known to his audience. By making these inversions the focus of his work, Bosch transformed nonculture into culture and turned the tables on received notions of the work of art. Although vestiges of the age-old format of the "Last Judgment" inform the organization of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*—that is, its panels offer us a central scene that represents the earth and the world of human beings between scenes that represent Paradise and Hell—its moralizing message about the need to repent and prepare for the life to come is scrambled by the imposition of another system, another order, for which there was no precedent. By replacing the Resurrection with a scene of human beings indulging in their sensual appetites, Bosch not only transformed a theological statement into a moral commentary on sensuality and sexuality, but he called attention to the creative power of the individual artist. The new function of the work is not just to instruct, for, animated by the concept of artistic license, it draws attention to its facture as a manifestation of an unusual and exceptional artistic talent. Bosch's use of the notion of the "world upside down" thus serves as a metaphor for the rising status aspired to and accorded the artist in the Renaissance. By moving the author of the image from a marginal to a central position, from one who carried out the instructions of others to one who was directly involved in the creation of pictorial meaning, Bosch found a means of suggesting that the artist could no longer be regarded as a mere craftsman.

The history of the way in which the values of Renaissance humanism, the class values of a narrow social elite, transformed the social function of artistic production is not unrelated to the cultural circumstances of our own time. The historicist ideology created by nineteenth-century idealist philosophy, which invested the transcendence ascribed to aesthetic value with purpose and meaning, no longer dominates the circumstances of artistic production. The Hegelian claim that artistic changes

pursue a necessary development, a claim born of a teleological view of history, has largely been abandoned. As a consequence, the modernist myth that attributed stylistic change to a historical imperative has been decisively challenged.

The collapse of a motivated history of immanent aesthetic value has led to a questioning of the definition of aesthetic value itself. In this context, the self-referential gestures of the art of Hieronymus Bosch, gestures that have been institutionalized as the means by which aesthetic value may be asserted, have become suspect, and artists increasingly seek ways to integrate their work with broader cultural and social functions. The goal of some of the most progressive tendencies of post-modernism is not to draw attention to the artists so much as to articulate political messages of social importance.⁵⁶ Whether or not the artist can escape commodification in an art market organized on capitalist principles remains uncertain. It is difficult for artists to market their work in a way that does not call attention to their role as individual creators in a cultural climate that still subscribes to the notion of the artist as genius. Nevertheless, the assertion of the autonomous power of the artist has increasingly been called into question as a legitimate ambition for artistic production. Considerations of this nature enable us to see how the sign systems of the present intersect with those of the past in the creation of new meaning. A historical moment concerned with the dissolution of transcendent notions of creativity enables us to appreciate the way in which this idea was first inscribed into the work of art in the Renaissance.

What are the stakes in interpreting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* as a manifestation of the rising aspirations of the Renaissance artist as opposed to an allegory of the astrological, alchemical, heretical, or folklore ideas of Bosch's own time? The latter purport to explain the significance of his pictorial forms through an account of Bosch's unknowable intentions, that is, they regard the surface of the work as the result of a complex process of symbolization in which Bosch encrypted his meaning behind a layer of baffling pictorial forms. I have argued, instead, that his enigmatic forms were the product of fantasy and a means by which the artist could call attention to his own role in the process of interpretation. Instead of taking for granted that *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is a work of "genius," I have tried to show the means by which "genius" is a socially constructed category. I have attempted to look around the edges of the Boschian enigma in order to see it as part of a broader set of historical issues. Rather than account for its mystery, I

have argued that this mystery is a deliberate creation of the artist. The stakes of this interpretation thus lie in the fact that Bosch's "genius" is not a precondition to the work of interpretation. Indeed, it is only by appreciating the pictorial gestures by which Bosch ensured himself a place in the canon of great artists admired by the Burgundian aristocracy and the humanistically educated upper classes that we gain insight into the quality and texture of his intelligence, ambition, and imagination, thus ensuring him a place in the canon of "great" artists we admire today.

NOTES

1. Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting. Its Origins and Character*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 357–58.

2. It would be impossible to represent the entire interpretive spectrum here. The following are examples of some of the alternatives that still command scholarly interest. Astrology: Andrew Pigler, "Astrology and Jerome Bosch," *Burlington Magazine* 92 (1950): 132–36; Lotte Brand Philip, "The Peddler by Hieronymus Bosch, a Study in Detection," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 9 (1958): 1–81; Anna Sychalska-Boczkowska, "Materials for the Iconography of Hieronymus Bosch's Triptych of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*," *Studia Muzeale Poznan* 5 (1966): 49–95. Alchemy: Jacques van Lennep, *Art et alchimie: Étude de l'iconographie hermetique et de ses influences* (Brussels, 1966); Madeleine Bergman, *Hieronymus Bosch and Alchemy*, trans. Donald Bergman (Stockholm, 1979); Laurinda Dixon, *Alchemical Imagery in Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights"* (Ann Arbor, 1981). Heresy: Wilhelm Fraenger, *The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch. Outlines of a New Interpretation*, trans. Eithne Williams and Ernst Kaiser (Chicago, 1951; first German ed., Coburg, 1947); idem, *Die Hochzeit zu Kana: Ein Dokument semitischer Gnosis bei Hieronymus Bosch* (Berlin, 1950); Patrik Reuterswärd, *Hieronymus Bosch* (Uppsala, 1970). Illustrated puns: Dirk Bax, *Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture Writing Deciphered*, trans. M. Bax-Botha (Rotterdam, 1979); idem, *Beschrijving en poging tot verklaring van het Tuin der Onkuisheiddrieluik van Jeroen Bosch, gevolgd door kritiek op Fraenger* (Amsterdam, 1956). For an introduction to the Bosch literature, see Walter Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch. An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston, 1983).

3. See Pater Gerlach, *Jheronimus Bosch. Opstellen over Leven en Werk*, ed. P. M. le Blanc (The Hague, 1988); J. K. Steppe, "Jheronimus Bosch. Bijdrage tot de historische en ikonographische studie van zijn werk," in *Jheronimus Bosch. Bijdragen bij gelegenheid van de herdenkingstentoonstelling te*

's-Hertogenbosch ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1967), 5–41; Walter Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York, 1973).

4. Paul Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch. Tussen Volksleven en Stadscultuur* (Berchem, 1987). Vandenbroeck's identification of Bosch's values with those of a humanist bourgeoisie anxious to define itself as distinct both from those who were less well off and from the aristocracy must now be considered in the light of the discovery of tax records that identify Bosch as one of the wealthiest citizens of his native city of Hertogenbosch. See Bruno Blonde and Hans Vlieghe, "The Social Status of Hieronymus Bosch," *Burlington Magazine* 131 (1989): 699–700.

5. Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch*, 178, my translation.

6. P. Vandenbroeck, "Jheronimus Bosch' zogenaamde Tuin der Lusten," *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor schone Kunsten, Antwerpen* (1989): 9–210.

7. Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)*; ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. John Johnston (New York, 1989).

8. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Roy Harris (La Salle, Ill., 1986).

9. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, 1981); Valentin Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, Mass., 1986; first ed., Moscow, 1929).

10. For an expanded treatment of these ideas, see my article, "Semiotics and the Social History of Art," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 985–99. Mine is not the first attempt to approach Bosch's visual forms from a semiotic perspective; see Albert Cook, *Changing the Signs. The Fifteenth-Century Breakthrough* (Lincoln, Neb., 1985). Cook made use of the arbitrariness of the Saussurean definition of the sign, the fact that it draws its meaning solely from its relation to all the other words in the language rather than from its relation to its referent, to argue that it was involved in an endless proliferation of meaning. His interpretation suggests that Bosch's forms can both mean anything or everything his interpreters have claimed them to mean. By relativizing the act of interpretation to this extent, Cook fails to acknowledge the ideological freight and political commitment that is a feature of the use of signs both in the past and the present.

11. Norman Bryson, "Art in Context," in *Studies in Historical Change*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville, 1992), 18–42.

12. See Sir Ernst Gombrich, "The Earliest Description of Bosch's 'Garden of Delights,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 403–6; also Steppe, "Jheronimus Bosch"; and P. Gerlach, "De Nassauers van Breda en Jeroen Bosch' 'Tuin der Lusten,'" in *Jheronimus Bosch*, 171–86. The following account of Bosch's humanist patrons is by no means complete. Among those with documented humanist interests are such patrons as Margaret of Austria, regentess of the Netherlands, Cardinal Domenico Grimani, and Damiao da Gois, the Antwerp agent of John III of Portugal.

13. For other aspects of Henry III's interest in the artistic forms of the Italian Renaissance, see R. van Luttervelt, "Renaissance Kunst te Breda. Vijf Studies," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 13 (1962): 55–104, and 14 (1963): 31–60; and Nicole Dacos, "Tommaso Vincidor. Un élève de Raphael aux Pays-Bas," in *Relations artistiques entre les Pays-Bas et l'Italie à la renaissance. Études dédiées à Suzanne Sulzberger*, ed. N. Dacos (Brussels, 1980): 61–90.

14. For Gossaert's dependence on Dürer, see Sadjja Herzog, "Tradition and Innovation in Gossaert's *Neptune and Amphitrite* and *Danae*," *Bulletin van het Boymans van Beuningen Museum* 19 (1968): 25–41.

15. For the use of mythological subjects in the production of erotic imagery, see G. Denhaene, "Les collections de Philippe de Clèves, le goût pour le nu et la renaissance aux Pays-Bas," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 45 (1975): 309–42; Larry Silver and Susan Smith, "Carnal Knowledge: The Late Engravings of Lucas van Leyden," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 29 (1978): 239–98; Larry Silver, "Figure nude, historie e poesie: Jan Gossaert and the Renaissance Nude in the Netherlands," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 37 (1986): 1–40.

16. J. K. Steppe, "Mencia de Mendoza et ses relations avec Erasme, Gilles de Busleyden et Jean-Louis Vives," in *Scrinium erasmanum. Mélanges historiques publiés sous le patronage de l'Université de Louvain à l'occasion du cinquième centenaire de la naissance d'Érasme*, 2 vols., ed. J. Coppens (Leiden, 1969), 1:449–506.

17. Mencia's art collection is not the only record of her humanist interests. Her library contained a number of works by ancient authors as well as by the leading humanist intellectual of her own time, Desiderius Erasmus. Mencia was, in addition, a patron of Erasmus' friend, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives. Vives lived in the Nassau palace at Breda from 1537 until his death in 1540. After her return to Spain, Mencia provided two professorships at the University of Valencia, and her will contains instructions for the foundation of a secondary school in Toledo, in which there were to be professors of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. See Th. M. Roest van Limburg, *Een Spaansche gravin van Nassau. Mencia de Mendoza, markiezin van Zenete, gravin van Nassau* (Leiden, 1908).

18. J. J. Sterk, *Filips van Bourgondie* (Zutphen, 1980), 137.

19. See Herzog, "Tradition and Innovation"; also, J. Duverger, "Jacopo de Barbari en Jan Gossaert bij Filips van Bourgondie te Souburg (1516)," in *Mélanges Hulin de Loo*, ed. P. Bergmans (Brussels, 1931), 142–53.

20. Gombrich, "Earliest Description," 404; my translation.

21. For Folengo and his poetry, see William Schupbach, "Doctor Parma's Medicinal Macaronic: Poem by Bartolotti, Pictures by Giorgione and Titian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 147–91.

22. Jose de Siguenza, *Tercera Parte de la Historia de la Orden de S. Geronimo* (Madrid, 1605), quoted by Charles de Tolnay, *Hieronymus Bosch* (Baden-Baden, 1966), 402.

23. Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabu-

lary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator* 8 (1977): 347–98, quotation on 368; also Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts. The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism in English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago, 1958), 55; and David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, 1981), 133. For the role of art theory in the establishment of the "autonomy" of art, see Michael Muller, "Künstlerische und materielle Produktion. Zur Autonomie der Kunst in der italienischen Renaissance," in *Autonomie der Kunst. Zur Genese und Kritik einer burgerlichen Kategorie*, ed. Gunther Busch (1972), 9–87.

24. Kemp, *ibid.*, 379; Martin Kemp, "Il Concetto dell'Anima' in Leonardo's Early Skull Studies," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 115–34; and Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 125–27.

25. Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia,'" 383.

26. Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, 1955), 43; also, Milton Nahm, "The Theological Background of the Theory of the Artist as Creator," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 8 (1947): 362–72; Joseph Koerner, "Albrecht Dürer and the Moment of Self-Portraiture," *Daphnis* 15 (1986): 409–39.

27. William Martin Conway, *The Writings of Albrecht Dürer* (London, 1958), 177.

28. Paul Stirn, "Friedrich die Weise und Jacopo de Barbari," in *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen Berlin* (1925): 130–34. For Barbari's restless career, see André de Hevesy, *Jacopo de Barbari. Le maître au caducée* (Paris and Brussels, 1925); and Luigi Servolini, *Jacopo de Barbari* (Padua, 1944).

29. For the history of the idea of *natura naturans* in the Renaissance, see Jan Bialostocki, "The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity," *Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1963), 19–30.

30. Quoted in Sterk, *Filips van Bourgondie*, 180 n. 40; my translation.

31. *Ibid.*, III.

32. See Murray W. Bundy, *The Theory of the Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought* (Urbana, 1927), 114–16.

33. For the history of this fad, see Nicole Dacos, *La Découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques a la renaissance* (London, 1969).

34. Translated from the Italian by E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order. A Study of the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca, 1979), 280.

35. Quoted in Summers, *Michelangelo and Language of Art*, 135–36. I have eliminated his citations of the original Portuguese.

36. M. R. James, "Pictor in Carmine," *Archaeologia or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity* 94 (1951): 141–66, quotation on 145. See also Meyer Schapiro, "On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art," in *Romanesque Art* (New York, 1977), 1–27.

37. See H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1952); Rosy Schilling, "Drolierie," in Otto Schmidt, ed., *Reallexicon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1959), cols. 567–88; Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Reveils et prodiges. Le Gothique fantastique* (Paris, 1960); Lillian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley, 1966); Gerhard Schmidt, "'Belehrender' und 'befreiender' Humor. Ein Versuch über die Funktionen des Komischen in der bildende Kunst des Mittelalters," in *Worüber Lacht das Publikum im Theater? Spass und Betroffenheit—Eins und Heute. Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Heinz Kindermann*, ed. Margret Dietrich (Vienna, 1984), 9–39. For an opposing point of view, one that argues that marginal illustrations are usually related to the texts with which they are associated in some didactically meaningful way, see D. K. Davenport, "Illustrations Direct and Oblique in the Margins of an Alexander Romance at Oxford," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 83–95. Like Davenport, Michael Camille has recently approached marginal imagery on the assumption that it is related to the texts. However, this relation is conceived of as multifaceted and not confined to moral comment. See *Images on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). I am grateful to Jonathan Alexander and Lucy Sandler for useful suggestions and help with bibliography.

38. For an interpretation of this scene as a reference to a passage in the "life" of Alexander the Great, recounted in the manuscript it illustrates, see Davenport, *ibid.*, 90–91.

39. See Lucy Freeman Sandler, "Reflections on the Construction of Hybrids in English Gothic Marginal Illustration," in *Art, the Ape of Nature. Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson*, ed. Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freedman Sandler (New York, 1981), 51–65.

40. Frederic Lyna, "De Jean Pucelle à Jérôme Bosch," *Scriptorium* 17 (1963): 310–13; Suzanne Sulzberger, "Jérôme Bôsch et les maîtres de l'enluminure," *Scriptorium* 16 (1962): 46–49; Walter Gibson, "Hieronymus Bosch and the Dutch Tradition," in *Album Amicorum J. G. van Gelder*, ed. J. Bruyn, et al. (The Hague, 1973), 128–31.

41. The connection between the "world upside down" of the manuscript margins and Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* has been noted by Gloria Vallese, "Follia e Mondo alla Rovescia nel 'Giardino delle Delizie' di Bosch," *Paragone*, n.s. 38 (1987): 3–22. The author does not link Bosch's use of the principle to *ut pictura poesis*. I thank Christopher Johns for this reference.

42. Vallese, *ibid.*, 13, has called attention to the fact that Bosch's birds are in the water while the sky is filled with flying fish.

43. See John Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (New York, 1966).

44. Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 85. For the "power of women" theme, see Friedrich Maurer, "Der Topos von den Minnesklaven: Zur Geschichte eine thematischen Gemeinschaft zwischen bildende Kunst und Dichtung im Mittelalter," *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesge-*

schichte 27 (1953): 182–206; Susan Smith, “To Woman’s Wiles I Fell: The Power of Women *Topos* and the Development of Medieval Secular Art,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1978).

45. This translation is from A. Hyatt Mayor, ed., *Late Gothic Engravings of Germany and the Netherlands. 682 Copperplates from the “Kritischer Katalog” of Max Lehrs* (New York, 1969), 343 n. 30.

46. Walter Gibson, “*The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch: The Iconography of the Central Panel,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 24 (1973): 1–26, 9.

47. *Ibid.*, 16–18.

48. See Jan Piet Filedt Kok, ed., *Livelier than Life. The Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet or the Housebook Master*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, 1985, cat. no. 89.

49. See Isabel Mateo Gomez, “El conejo cazador del ‘Jardin de las delicias’ de Bosco en una miniatura del siglo XIV,” *Archivo español de arte* 45 (1972): 166–67.

50. J. J. Alexander, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy. A Book of Hours for Engelbert of Nassau* (New York, 1970). For the house of Nassau’s collection of illuminated manuscripts, see Anne Korteweg, “De bibliotheek van Willem van Oranje: De handschriften,” in *Boeken van en Rond Willem van Oranje* (exhibition catalogue), (The Hague, 1984), 9–39.

51. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1969); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1965).

52. For an example, see Michael Camille “Labouring for the Lord: The Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter,” *Art History* 10 (1987): 423–54.

53. Boris Uspenskii, Juri Lotman, et al., “Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures (as applied to Slavic texts),” in *Structure of Text and Semiotics of Culture*, ed. Jan van der Eng and Mojmir Grygar (The Hague, 1973), 1–28.

54. See Gerd Unverfehrt, *Hieronymus Bosch: Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1980).

55. Thomas Crow, “Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts,” in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin (Halifax, 1983), 215–64.

56. This is a theme of several essays in Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle, 1985).