

The World of Bruegel in Black and White  
from the Collection of the Royal Library of Belgium

[Exhibition]

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# The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder as Pictorial Sources for his Paintings

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## Introduction: A Review of Exhibitions in Japan

There have been two Bruegel print exhibitions in the past in Japan. I will discuss their background and art historical significance, and also introduce new concepts on Bruegel prints that have emerged with the present exhibition.

The first Bruegel exhibition in Japan "Exposition des estampes de Peter Bruegel l'ancien," held at The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura in 1972 featured 81 Bruegel prints on loan from the collection of the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels and 10 prints from the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura. The Japanese exhibition catalogue was a translation of Louis Lebeer's *Catalogue Raisonné*, excluding his introduction essay.<sup>1)</sup> Lebeer's *Catalogue Raisonné* was originally published in 1969 as the exhibition catalogue for the commemoration at the Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels, of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the death of Pieter Bruegel the Elder in 1569. The Kamakura exhibition catalogue included the essay "Pieter Bruegel the Elder: the Man and his Art"<sup>2)</sup> by Teiichi Hijikata, Director of the Kamakura Museum. In 1974, publisher Iwanami Shoten published the Japanese translation of Lebeer's entire catalogue together with a separate folio size edition of reproductions of Bruegel prints.<sup>3)</sup> This publication has greatly contributed to the study of Bruegel prints in Japan.

The 1989 exhibition "The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder" was presented at the Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo and three other museums in Japan.<sup>4)</sup> More than half of 96 prints on display are from the Royal Library of Belgium. The others are from the Antwerp Municipal Print Museum and the Mayer van den Bergh Collection, Antwerp, and other institutions. The exhibition catalogue, in both Japanese and English versions, includes essays on the prints by catalogue editor David Freedberg, Jan Van der Stock and other scholars.<sup>5)</sup> The English version, later called the "Tokyo Catalogue" drew attention when its English translations of the Latin, Dutch and French margin inscriptions were quoted for the "The Printed World of Bruegel the Elder" exhibition in 1995 held at the St. Louis Art Museum in the United States.<sup>6)</sup> Keith Moxey, one of the contributors to the catalogue for the Bridgestone Museum of Art was in agreement with David Kunzle<sup>7)</sup> in interpreting that one can deduce from Bruegel prints that townspeople, with their particular type of pride, looked down on peasants and deemed them to be morally lacking.<sup>8)</sup> I have, however, continually over many years put forward an opposing interpretation, asserting that Bruegel, in both his prints and paintings, was sympathetic to the peasants and enthusiastically agreed with an anonymous poet of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in

praise of peasants: "Let us praise the peasant/ With songs and delight,/ For he alone excels/ In true virtue./ With his limbs aglow in sweat/ Day in day out he nourishes and feeds/ Villages, castles and towns,/ The noble and good peasant,/ To whom everyone owes life/ May Christ, who, for our bliss/ And to honor the fine peasant/ Shed his blood and body/ As wine and bread,/ And who appeared as wise peasant,/ After His resurrection,/ Come and help the noble and good peasant,/ To whom everyone owes life"<sup>9)</sup>

The "World of Bruegel in Black and White from the Collection of the Royal Library of Belgium" presents 150 prints, including 76 works by Bruegel, 74 works by his contemporaries and artists of the following generation. It marks the third Bruegel print exhibition to be held in Japan. This time, through close cooperation and joint study with the researchers of the Print Room of the Royal Library, 16 prints that had been previously attributed to Bruegel in other exhibitions were discussed and determined to be prints of other artists (for instance, cat. 90–101). At the same time, some prints that were on Lebeer's "complementary list"<sup>10)</sup> have now been included as Bruegel prints (cat. 33, 34), on the principle that they are "based on Bruegel's paintings or compositions," for the comparison with other Flemish masters of this exhibition. This exhibition offers for the first time an opportunity to extensively compare Bruegel with his contemporaries and artists of the following generation in relation to style, manner, concept, iconography and subject matter concerned with landscape, religion, moral allegory, proverbs, peasant folk culture, the four seasons, the representation of the labors of the months, and so on. The exhibition will demonstrate the extraordinary originality of Bruegel prints in comparison with the others. We can also observe the extent of the influence of Bruegel's style and iconography on his contemporaries and the next generation. Moreover the differences in point of view between Bruegel and the other artists in comprehending peasant festivities becomes obvious. Bruegel depicted the toil the peasants experience throughout the year with sympathy and a sense of affinity. In addition, the Japanese translations of the Latin, French and Dutch inscriptions done especially for non-Bruegel prints included in the exhibition will contribute to further study of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Flemish art in Japan.

Bruegel prints have been exhibited throughout the world, but scholars seem not to have sufficiently discussed how the prints became the source of inspiration for the concepts, style, compositions and iconography of the paintings. Although the cases are limited, some prints are also influenced by his paintings produced earlier than the prints. This paper compares various themes and motifs to show

the correlation between Bruegel's prints and paintings.

Bruegel's drawings and paintings were kept over several centuries in private collections without public showings, but the prints were available for purchase by ordinary people as well and could be readily viewed by the public. The publishers of the prints at the time would choose themes and commission suitable artists in reaction to market tastes and interests. Print publishing was strictly a business, targeting an unspecified number of buyers; it was not limited to lesson teaching, and took visual pleasure and entertainment value into consideration. In his early prints with human figures, *The Temptation of St Anthony* (cat. 35), for example, Bruegel presented a variety of strange creatures (oversize human heads and fish), beings of combined human, animal and vessel elements (like a pot with human limbs, a human head with an animal's tail), or fantasy motifs (windows as eyes) that do not appear in the text of *The Golden Legend* by Jacobs de Voragine from the thirteenth century, and that fostered Bruegel's inexhaustible creative power. Through his ample training composing prints on subjects of religious themes, moral allegories, or folk culture, proverbs, and the seasons, Bruegel gained very rich experience as a painter. Prints function "to read images" and the margin inscriptions on themes of religion and morality for the intellectual class were in Latin while inscriptions for commoners were in Dutch or French on subjects of their interest such as proverbs, village festivals or jesters. In this way, by conceiving and adjusting the iconography for different interests according to levels of education and social class, Bruegel developed and deepened his humanist ideas and his affinity with the peasant. This brought him to be a mature and great artist.

## I. Positioning Bruegel Prints within his Lifework as an Artist

Bruegel's work as an artist can be divided between his activity as a draughtsman and as a painter. From 1554, he worked as a draughtsman and produced a number of preparatory drawings for prints for print publisher Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp. From 1556, with *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (cat. 35) in particular, his prints took a turn from landscape compositions towards a concentration on the human figure. Sometime after 1559, Bruegel started to produce paintings energetically, although he continued to work on preparatory drawings for prints until his relocation to Brussels in 1563. After 1563, he continued to produce drawings for prints, but it is obvious that their numbers decreased considerably. What is of particular interest is that Bruegel's paintings benefited from his previous rich experience of inventing compositions for prints with an exhaustive range and encyclopedic coverage of subjects. These subjects included cosmic landscapes, village and town square compositions, numerous illustrations of proverbs and parables, children's games and festivals of the common people.

Historically, Bruegel prints have been more popular and highly evaluated than his paintings that were known only among collectors such as the Habsburger families, Flemish intellectuals and merchants.<sup>10</sup> Bruegel's son, Pieter Brueghel the Younger, and artists belonging to his workshop, had copied numerous of the father's paintings with inconsistent quality, causing misunderstanding and confusion in the market from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his book, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland in the Year MDCCLXXXI*, commented on the powerful expression of Bruegel's *Massacre of the Innocents*, but noted critically, "This painter

was totally ignorant of all the mechanical art of making a picture."<sup>12</sup>

Attention should be given to which of two versions of *The Massacre of the Innocents* Reynolds may have seen in the Royal Collection, London. The original painting we know now was retouched, probably in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The massacred infants were painted over as livestock or as bundles. The work was even re-titled in the inventory records of the time as *Village Plunder*.<sup>13</sup> Therefore it could have been the other Royal Collection version, a copy by Bruegel's son, Pieter the Younger, that Reynolds might have observed. This copy of the *Massacre of the Innocents* is faithful to the original composition before the over-painting.

Bruegel prints were popular in his own time, and Antwerp publisher Christoph Plantin exported quite a number of them to his country, France.<sup>14</sup> The prints circulated throughout Europe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and successive publishers sometimes added or changed inscriptions for new markets according to the taste or concerns of their time. In order to respond to the market during the so-called "Bruegel revival" of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bruegel paintings as well as his prints were produced not only by his son's workshop, but by outside workshops as well. Although Bruegel prints were rather expensive, his satire, his presentations of moral lessons and scenes of activities such as townsfolk ice-skating, peasant wedding dances and village fairs, colored by his humor and feelings of closeness to popular culture were highly appreciated (cat. 89, 109, 110, 112).

There are some questions concerning the originality of Bruegel prints. Prints like the grisaille *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (cat. 33) or *The Land of Cockaigne* (cat. 80), for example, were not originally intended by Bruegel to be printed. Although they are classified as reproduction prints, they are, strictly speaking, not Bruegel prints. Another issue is that Cock's widow, Diericx Volcxken, who took over management following her husband's death in 1570, engaged able artists to make prints reflecting the spirit, subjects, motifs and compositions of Bruegel. These prints (also paintings) are called "Bruegelians (in Dutch Bruegeliaans)." It should be noted that they were sometimes issued with the entry "Bruegel inv" (or P. BRUEGEL INVENT), meaning that they would have been composed by followers in Bruegel's style. Bruegel died in 1569, without having completed *Autumn and Winter* (cat. 133, 134) for a series of the four seasons (cat. 131, 132) commissioned by Cock. Cock engaged Hans Bol, an expert miniature landscape painter, to complete the series following the style of Bruegel. These works are inscribed with the name Hans Bol, but it is likely that other prints Cock's widow commissioned to Bol were issued as "Bruegel inv." Van Bastelaer (1907) also included such Bruegelian works as Bruegel prints.

## II. The Relevance of Bruegel Prints (Drawings) to his Paintings

To date, the relevance of Bruegel prints to his paintings and to later prints has not been fully discussed. I will examine below various individual prints. In the case that the publication date of a print is unknown, the date of the preparatory drawings offers a basis for assumption.

### 1. *Penitent Magdalene*, engraving (drawing, 1555) (cat. 8)

The jagged mountain peak that figures prominently in the





fig. 1 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Jagged Mountain peaks" (detail of *Penitent Magdalene*) c. 1555-56, cat. 8



fig. 2 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Jagged Mountain peaks" (detail of *Hunters in the Snow*) 1565, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

background (fig. 1) appears also in the painting *Hunters in the Snow* (1565) (fig. 2). The Alpine mountain, with its rocky south-facing slope appearing black, probably as a result of melting snow, seems to have made a deep visual impression on Bruegel. In the print, the rocky features of the Alps are depicted as part of a large natural landscape, while in the painting the Alps in the distance are a picturesque accent to the hunters in the foreground and the rural landscape of Flanders in the mid-ground. The composition of the painting is thus a kind of "Weltlandschaft" (universal, or "composite") landscape. Further, in the print there is a river meandering through a large valley dotted by shrubs, a technique reflected in Bruegel's later painting *Maggie on the Gallows* (fig. 11). The motif of a fortress situated high on a rocky mountain in the print is another theme that frequently appears in Bruegel's later paintings.

**2. Alpine Landscape with a Deep Valley c. 1555-56, engraving (cat. 11)**  
There are several large angular rocks in the mid-ground (fig. 3) that make up the larger rocky mountain. This representation prefigures the use of a similar expression in the background of the painting *The Haymaking* (c. 1565) (fig. 4). In the print we can see some medieval fortresses and castles that are painted in *The Haymaking*. While the rocky mountain is placed centrally as an accent in the print, it is positioned off to the left to allow the vision of an unlimited vista in the painting.



fig. 3 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Angular Rocks" (detail of *Alpine Landscape with a deep valley*) c. 1555-56, cat. 11



fig. 4 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Large Angular Rocks" (detail of *The Haymaking*) c. 1565, oil, Prague, Nelahozeves Castle, Roudnice Lobkowitz

**3. Netherlandish Wagon c. 1555-56, engraving (cat. 15)**  
In this work, a man, possibly a sufferer of leprosy, is coming out of a hut positioned at the center of the composition, just below the figure of a cross (fig. 5). He holds a wooden clappers, "kleppers" in Dutch, that persons afflicted with leprosy were obliged to go outside to sound. In the painting *The Numbering at Bethlehem*, there is a similar figure with a clappers in the foreground (fig. 6) at the entrance of a

hut. In the painting, the hut is not particularly segregated from the village, whereas in the print the hut is on an isolated hill rather far from the village with its church and farmhouses. Probably the scene of the print is closer to the reality of the time. A figure seated in front of a hut in the foreground of *The Flight into Egypt* by the Master of the Prodigal Son, (fig. 7) seems to be suffering from leprosy and receiving charity. This scene gives a concrete feel for the conditions of the time. The villagers would not have had direct contact with people with leprosy, but would leave food in containers in front of their dwellings.



fig. 5

fig. 5 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Man coming out of a hut" (detail of *Netherlandish Wagon*) c. 1555-56, cat. 15

fig. 6 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Man coming out of a hut" (detail of *The Numbering at Bethlehem*) 1566, oil, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België

fig. 7 Master of the Prodigal Son, "Man receiving charity" (detail of *The Flight into Egypt*) mid-16th century, oil, Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts



fig. 6



fig. 7

**4. Rustic Cares, c. 1555-56, engraving (cat. 12)**

At the right foreground, a peasant removing the blade of a scythe from its handle sharpens it with a small wooden hammer. (fig. 8). This is seen also in the left foreground of the painting *The Haymaking* (fig. 9). Obviously, since right and left would naturally have been reversed in the process of printing from the original drawing, Bruegel's positioning of the farmer sharpening his blade in *The Haymaking* was actually identical to that for his print *Rustic Cares*. The characteristic surface of the mountains in the background of the print (fig. 10) appears, although in reverse, in *The Maggie on the Gallows* (1568) (fig. 11). The broad plain in the valley depicted in the print is also present in the painting. In the lower right of the print there are two trees intertwined, and this motif appears again on the left in *Maggie on the Gallows*.



fig. 8 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Peasant sharpening the blade of a scythe" (detail of *Rustic Cares*) c. 1555-56, cat. 12



fig. 9 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Peasant sharpening the blade of a scythe" (detail of *The Haymaking*) c. 1565, oil, Prague, Nelahozeves Castle, Roudnice Lobkowitz





fig. 10 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Steep Peaks" (detail of *Rustic Cares*) c. 1555-56, cat. 12



fig. 11 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Steep Peaks" (detail of *The Magpie on the Gallows*) 1568, oil, Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum

#### 5. *The Way to Emmaus*, c. 1555-1556, engraving (cat. 16)

Flowers by the roadside at the right foreground (fig. 12) are delicately delineated. A similar grouping in the same position is found in the work *Wooded Region* (fig. 13, cat. 19). Bruegel was especially skilled at representing both a dynamic mountain landscape and delicate wild flowers. The field poppy blossoms shown off the road in the foreground of *The Haymaking* (fig. 14) are probably the most beautiful depiction of flowers in all of Bruegel's paintings. Bruegel's son, Jan Brueghel, who was nicknamed "Flower Bruegel," seemingly inherited his ability to delineate flowers from his father.

#### 6. *The Seven Deadly Sins* series (cat. 38-45) and Bruegel's

##### Approach to the Style of Hieronymus Bosch

At the stage when Bruegel moved from prints to painting, he consciously chose to approach the style of Hieronymus Bosch. This was due to requests from Cock who saw a commercial chance in the Bosch revival at the time. Bruegel as a young artist was probably stimulated by the unprecedented demonic world of Bosch. Although we can trace some representation of Hell from medieval manuscripts in Bosch's altarpieces, his remarkable and novel inventions of devils, monsters, demonic creatures, and witches are so impressive that Bosch was considered as a new creator of devils. Dominicus Lampsonius, a humanist contemporary of Bruegel, in his book, published in 1572, after Bruegel's death, even eulogizes Bruegel as the "new Hieronymus Bosch." (see cat. 1) This epitaph reflects the highest praise for Bruegel even though Bosch had been long dead.



fig. 12 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Flowers by the roadside" (detail of *The Way to Emmaus*) c. 1555-56, cat. 16

fig. 13 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Flowers by the roadside" (detail of *Wooded Region*) c. 1555-56, cat. 19



fig. 14 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Corn poppy blossoms" (detail of *The Haymaking*) c. 1565, oil, Prague, Nelahozeves Castle, Roudnice Lobkowitz



fig. 13

fig. 14

Below I will attempt to compare Bruegel and Bosch from the point of specific motifs in their works.

In the central panel (fig. 15) of Bosch's *The Haywain* triptych altarpiece, people from all levels of society are waging battle for the hay, and a man wearing a hat is astride another man, ready to kill him with a knife. This scene, with a similar murderer wearing a hat, appears inside the barrel positioned in the mid-ground of Bruegel's *Anger* (fig. 16, cat. 40). However, in Bruegel's work, the man being attacked also has a knife, making the scene more aggressive. It is also symbolic that this scene happens under the personification of *Anger's* big cloak.

In the same triptych, the figure of a monk-like young man dressed in blue (fig. 17) is playing a bagpipe and provoking a nun. In Bruegel's *Lust*, a similar figure (fig. 18, cat. 45) leads a procession of strange humiliations for an adulterous man wearing a hat and riding on a monster (cat. 44). This hat, originally given as a bishop's headdress, expressing Bruegel's satire on lecherous religious men, was changed to an ordinary hat by the print publisher Hieronymus Cock because of censorship by the Royal authorities. In the central panel of Bosch's *The Last Judgment*, a witch-like demon is pouring sauce on the head of a skewered man (fig. 19). In Bruegel's *Anger* the same act is performed in the hut in the mid-ground (fig. 20), but the monster



fig. 15 Hieronymus Bosch, "Murder Scene" (detail of *The Haywain*, central panel) 1485-1505, oil, Madrid, Museo del Prado



fig. 16 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Murder Scene" (detail of *Anger*) 1558, cat. 40





fig. 17



fig. 18

fig. 17  
Hieronymus Bosch, "Young worshiper-like man playing a bagpipe" (detail of *The Haywain*, central panel) 1485-1505, oil, Madrid, Museo del Prado

fig. 18  
Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Monk-like man playing a bagpipe" (detail of *Lust*) 1557, cat. 45



fig. 19 Hieronymus Bosch, "Demon grilling a skewered man" (detail of *The Last Judgement*, central panel) 1506-16, Vienna, Akademie der Bildenden Künste



fig. 20 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Demon grilling a skewered man" (detail of *Anger*) 1558, cat. 40



fig. 21 Hieronymus Bosch, "Couple in a fragile sphere" (detail of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, central panel) c. 1480-90, oil, Madrid, Museo del Prado



fig. 22 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Couple in embrace in a glass orb" (detail of *Emy*) 1557, cat. 43

creature is pouring sauce on the human figure's genitals, further emphasizing the physical pain.

In the central panel of Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, a young man caresses a girl in a sphere (fig. 21) covered by a fragile diaphanous plant film representing the ephemeral transiency of Eros. In Bruegel's *Lust*, we see a naked man and woman in embrace in a glass orb within the shell of a mussel (fig. 22), precariously atop a tree, as a metaphor for the instability of a couple's physical relationship.

## 7. Comparisons of Monsters in *The Seven Deadly Sins* and in Paintings.

In *The Seven Deadly Sins* series, Bruegel drew a number of motifs evocative of Bosch styled devils and demons, probably also at the request of Hieronymus Cock. Bruegel made so-called "grillos," crawling creatures with only head and legs or feet or hands, and no trunk. He seems to be insisting that every sin can be visualized as a "beast." Gradually, however, Bruegel moved away from Bosch's style, and created grotesque beings of his own invention. This can be seen in the period when Bruegel was concentrating on paintings, and

particularly in *Dulle Griet* (Malicious Griet, 1561) or *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (1562). His original monsters in these works are produced from the combination of animals, musical instruments and motifs based on familiar objects of his time.<sup>19</sup> There is a figure with human head and hands, but the body is a hurdy gurdy (fig. 23), or there are fish and mussel characters. These are "Bruegel monsters." They seem to have something in common with pop-art demons that relate to our daily life experiences.

In *Avanice* (1558, cat. 38), a male creature with butterfly wings in the left foreground is taking coins from a money-bag (fig. 24), and a similar being in an exact reversed pose in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (fig. 25) seems to be female. However, they do not seem particularly strange. Just below to the left in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* is a female with human head and torso, but at the lower half of her body is a monster causing her to scream threateningly. In the print, there is a group of men at the center right, shooting at a suspended money-bag. A thief is cutting the purse of one of them, who is a monk-like man, and the thief, in turn, is the target of a pickpocket behind him (fig. 26). This kind of episode was further adapted in *The Misanthrope* (1568, fig. 27), a monumental painting of Bruegel's later years.



fig. 23 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hurdy-gurdy demon" (detail of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*) 1562, oil, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België



fig. 24 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Creature with butterfly wings" (detail of *Avanice*) 1558, cat. 38



fig. 25 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Creature with butterfly wings" (detail of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*) 1562, oil, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België



fig. 26 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Thief cutting the purse of a monk-like man" (detail of *Avanice*) 1558, cat. 38



fig. 27 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Misanthrope*, 1568, oil, Naples, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte



fig. 28 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Grillos" eating porridge" (detail of *Gluttony*) 1558, cat. 42



fig. 29 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Grillos" putting a pie on the head" (detail of *The Dulle Griet*) 1561, oil, Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh



In *Gluttony* (1558, cat. 42), again a grillo without body in the foreground (fig. 28) has a bowl of porridge with a spoon standing in it on his head, and is eating porridge with another spoon in his right hand. A very similar creature appears in the above-mentioned painting *Dulle Griet* (fig. 29). It is humorous, like a *manga*, and not frightening at all. Bruegel thus transformed the Bosch inspired monsters and demons of his prints into more familiar, more human-like, characters in his paintings.

In *Envy* (c. 1558, cat. 43), two dogs in the foreground (fig. 30) fight for a bone. This illustrates a Dutch proverb "Twee honden aan één been," (two fighting over one job, chance or position.) The proverb also fits the idea that coveting the belongings of others leads to acts of "envy." One year following this work, Bruegel completed the painting *The Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559) and illustrated this same proverb. In the painting, though, one of the dogs is a fuzzy black dog and the other a skinny white dog (fig. 31), emphasizing more the pictorial effect.

#### 8. *The Last Judgment* (1558 cat. 30), engraving

Following medieval traditional iconography, the entrance to Hell is depicted as the mouth of a giant monster with razor-sharp teeth (fig. 32). The entrance to Hell portrayed in *Pride* (1558, cat. 39) and *The Descent of Christ into Limbo* (c. 1558, cat. 29) is also seen in *The Last Judgment* where it is the most threatening. The motif is used as well in *Dulle Griet* (fig. 33), but here it departs from medieval iconography, and the entrance to Hell sports eyebrows made of pots for catching starlings, eyelids made of wooden slats, nose hairs of dead branches, a nose ring, etc., that are unique expressions prescient of 20<sup>th</sup> century surrealism. In the print *The Last Judgment* we see also a host of redeemed souls being ushered into Heaven. In *The Triumph of Death* (c. 1562), a painting completed around a year after *Dulle Griet*, an anthropomorphic mass of death appears. It is an eerie presence that attacks the living. This kind of mass image became a "specialty" in Bruegel's paintings.

Let's take a look at the angels blowing trumpets in the *The Last Judgment* print. The phrase, "the son of man will send his angels with the great sound of trumpet," appears in the Gospel. According to Matthew (24:31), Bruegel's trumpets in the *The Last Judgment* are like those used in ancient Rome to celebrate a return in triumph of victory. This is the case also for the trumpet in the angel's hands in the



fig. 30 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Two dogs fighting for a bone" (detail of *Envy*) 1557, cat. 43

fig. 31 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Two dogs fighting for a bone" (detail of *The Netherlandish Proverbs*) 1559, oil, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie



fig. 32 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Entrance to Hell" (detail of *The Last Judgment*) 1558, cat. 30



fig. 33 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Entrance to Hell" (detail of *The Dulle Griet*) 1561, oil, Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh



fig. 34 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Angel blowing a trumpet" (detail of *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins*) c. 1560-63, cat. 31

fig. 35 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Angels blowing trumpets" (detail of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*) 1562, oil, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België

fig. 34

fig. 35

print *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* (c. 1560-63, fig. 34, cat. 31) and the painting *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (1562, fig. 35).

#### 9. *Justice*, engraving (cat. 51) (drawing 1559, cat. 50)

There are various scenes in the background of the execution of sinners (fig. 36) by hanging, by wheel (the sinner is bound to a wheel on a high pole and left to be eaten alive by vultures), and by fire. In



fig. 36 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Scenes of execution" (detail of *Justice*) 1559, cat. 51



fig. 37 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Scenes of execution" (detail of *The Triumph of Death*) 1562, oil, Madrid, Museo del Prado



the painting *The Triumph of Death* (c. 1562, fig. 37), there are even more vivid representations in the background. For the painting, unlike the print with its series of executions taking place all in a row, the executions are happening in differentiated areas, and we can observe the actual hanged sinners at the gallows.

#### 10. *Fortitude*, engraving (drawing 1560, cat. 53)

The influence of Bosch is no longer seen in *The Seven Virtues* series. *Fortitude*, however, is an exception, with its knights on horseback fighting demons with their long spears (fig. 38). In the painting *The Suicide of Saul* (1562, fig. 39) the armed soldiers with their long spears are even more densely delineated.



fig. 38 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Fighting knights on horseback" (detail of *Fortitude*) c. 1560, cat. 53



fig. 39 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Fighting knights on horseback" (detail of *The Suicide of Saul*) 1562, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

### III. Painted Images as Pictorial Sources for Prints

I would like to point out the opposite phenomenon to the above, that is, where Bruegel's painted images became pictorial sources for prints. Bruegel's drawings for "The Seasons" series were commissioned by Cock. The drawing for *Spring* (fig. 45, cat. 131) was executed in 1565, but the drawing for *Summer* (fig. 41, cat. 132) was delayed and only completed in 1568. It seems likely that Bruegel used his pictorial experience of the painting *The Corn Harvest* (1565, fig. 40), when he composed the drawing *Summer* three years later. What developments took place in the print rendition of the peasants harvesting the grain in the painting? We see in the painting the work of cutting, collecting and carrying the wheat, along with the dominant scene of some of the peasants taking lunch or napping in the foreground. However, in the print, the accent is mainly on the two powerful figures in the foreground, one drinking from a large jar and the other wielding a scythe, while the other figures are radically diminished in the background perspective. The placement of a scythe on the inscription is an invention by Bruegel that calls to mind the



fig. 40 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Corn Harvest*, 1565, oil, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Image copyright ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY



fig. 41 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Summer*, 1570, cat. 132



fig. 44 Hans Bol, *August, Harvesting the Wheat and Rest*, late 16th century, engraving

fig. 42 Simon Bening, "August" *Hennessy Book of Hours*, c. 1520, Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium



fig. 43 Virgil Solis, *August: Harvesting the Wheat and Taking Rest*, c. 1530, woodcut



design of modern advertisements. In another painting, *The Peasant and the Bird Nester* (1568), there is an extreme close-up of a peasant in the foreground pointing accusingly at a boy climbing a tree to steal from a bird's nest. *The Peasant Dance* (c. 1568) also has a close-up focus on a peasant couple in the foreground. All these dominant figures in the foreground are characteristics found in Bruegel's later periods, which apparently are reflected in *Summer*.

The iconography of peasant work in the field, and of lunch and rest, in *The Corn Harvest* can be traced back to representations of the labors of the months in Illuminated Flemish Breviaries or Books of Hours from the early Middle Ages through the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and also in mid-16<sup>th</sup> century printed calendars (fig. 43, 44). The miniature *August* (fig. 42), however, diverges from the conventional iconography of the manuscripts and calendars in print, and the new iconography Bruegel invented expresses the peasants' struggle with the summer heat. He concentrates on one peasant cutting wheat and another drinking water. These two dynamic men are emblematic, performing the meaning of summer in peasant life.

#### IV. The Role of a Print in the Reconstruction of a Lost Painting

It is possible to reconstruct Bruegel's lost or unknown painting from



fig. 45 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Spring*, 1570, cat. 131



fig. 46 Simon Bening, "March: Preparing the flower bed", *Book of Hours*, c. 1530, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek



fig. 47 Gerard Horenbout, "March: Preparing the flower bed", *Breviary*, c. 1520, Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh



fig. 48 Gerard Horenbout, "April: Sheep grazing", *Rothschild Book of Hours*, c. 1530, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

his print *Spring*. As mentioned in part III of this essay, the print *Spring* (fig. 45, cat. 131) plays a very important role in Bruegel's paintings of "Seasonal Labors" (1565). There are five extant works, *The Gloomy Day* showing early spring, *The Haymaking* representing summer, the midsummer *The Corn Harvest*, the late-autumn *The Return of the Herd*, and the winter scene *The Hunters in the Snow*. It is highly likely that the missing painting represents a spring scene, most probably gardening by peasants and other similar activities having a secondary role as in the print *Spring*. Both the print *Spring* and the lost painting were produced in the same year, and therefore there would be some iconographical resemblance between the two so that the composition of the lost painting can be reconstructed based on the print *Spring*. The painting *The Corn Harvest*, and the print *Summer* depict apparently different composition structures as discussed above, but this is probably due to the three year gap in their production.

Let's observe the print *Spring* more closely. The Dutch words "Lenten, Mert, April, Meij" (Spring, March, April, May) are written in the margin of the drawing *Spring*, but when published as a print, were replaced with the Latin "Ver Pueritae compare" (Spring is like childhood) in the middle; "Martius, Aprilis, Maius sunt tempora veris" (March, April and May are the times of Spring) on the left, and "Vere Venus gaudet florentibus aurea sertis" (In Spring, gold Venus delights in garlands blossoming,) on the right.<sup>160</sup> March is depicted as the month for preparing the flowerbeds; April as the time for shearing sheep; May as the time when the gentry go boating or enjoy leisure in the garden. In these representations of months, Bruegel inherited iconographical tradition from Flemish Breviaries, Books of Hours, calendar prints. For example, Simon Bening's *March* (fig. 46), Gardening prefigures Bruegel's depiction of peasants greeting the lady





fig. 49 Simon Bening, "May: Gentry boating", *The Golf Book*, c. 1530, London, The British Library

However according to Paul Lindemans, peasants sheared sheep even in April in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Also, in Bening's *May* (fig. 49), a scene of the middle or bourgeois class boating and walking pleasantly in the garden appears common in German calendar prints a generation before (fig. 50).

Considering this background, we can surmise that the lost painting of the "Seasonal Labors" series by Bruegel, that could be titled *Gardening*, also may have portrayed peasants planting flowers in the landowner's garden as the main scene, along with sheep shearing around the garden or sheep grazing in the meadow. As the main subject of the "Four Seasons" series was always peasant



fig. 50 Virgil Solis, "May: Townspeople Boating", c. 1530, woodcut



fig. 51 Pieter Bruegel the Younger, "Peasant Dance" (detail of *Spring*), after 1617, oil, Bucarest Romanian National Museum of Art

of the manor and planting seedlings in flowerbeds. Gerard Horenbout's *March* (fig. 47) reveals a precedent for the arch of rambler roses that appears in Bruegel's *Spring*.

However, a typical labor of April in the miniatures, exemplified in Horenbout's *April* (fig. 48), is a peasant bringing sheep to graze in the meadow. Thus Bruegel seems to unusually put sheep shearing as an April activity in *Spring*. Sheep shearing was traditionally portrayed as an activity that takes place in June, so April was too early for it.

work and accompanying recreation as secondary activities, it is likely that the lost painting *Gardening* would have represented peasants folk dancing rather than aristocrats boating in the canal and picnicking in the garden. When Bruegel's son, Pieter the

Younger painted *Spring* (fig. 51) after his father's print, he depicted peasants dancing, not gentry. It is possible that he had directly seen his father's lost work. On the other hand, when Abel Grimmer did a painting based on Bruegel's print of *Spring*, he painted the recreation of gentry and bourgeois class people, similar to what is in the composition of the print.

Let's look also at the recreations shown in Bruegel's other four paintings from "Seasonal Labors." *The Gloomy Day* shows peasant families on return from a carnival in the foreground and also the joyous peasant dance in the yard behind the farm. In *The Haymaking* there is an archery competition in the village; in *The Corn Harvest*, swimming in a pond and shooting geese; in *The Hunters in the Snow* ice-skating, sleigh riding, top spinning, curling and other activities.

## V. Folk Culture in the Prints

Bruegel's works may have been among the earliest paintings in the history of Flemish art to illustrate folk culture of his time with such richness and detail. His prints, particularly those from around 1556, when he began to concentrate on human figure compositions, are like documentary recordings of daily life of the time. I have confirmed through research at the Open-Air Museum Bokrijk and other local museums in Belgium that most of the tools and implements depicted by Bruegel were in use not only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century but also well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first director of the Open-Air Museum Bokrijk, Jozef Weyns, has greatly promoted research in this field.<sup>18</sup> Weyns' findings, based on surveys of the daily life of farmers, their tools and their farms and barns that differed according to locality, were made public at his museum. It is worthwhile to comment on how this very interesting research on the implements of daily life relates to the prints of Bruegel. The research is also very useful for understanding how everyday life was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### 1. "Hor"

Because glass was too expensive for farmers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they covered their windows with a wooden plate or with stretched membranes of animal internal organs. Another possibility was to cover the openings with a "hor," a kind of screen made by woven willow branches and reeds (fig.



fig. 52 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hor" (detail of *The Kermis of Saint George*) c. 1560, cat. 110



fig. 53 "Hor", The Open-Air Museum Bokrijk, Photo by Yoko Mori



fig. 54 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hor" (detail of *The Netherlandish Proverbs*) 1559, oil, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie



53). The “hor” allowed for good ventilation and light and also seemed to prevent passers-by from peeking in or stray dogs from eating food inside. According to Weyns’ research, the oldest “hor” goes back to the year 1377.<sup>19</sup> We can see “hors” in the prints *Gluttony* (cat. 42), *The Kermis of Saint George’s Day* (fig. 52, cat. 110), *The Kermis at Hoboken* (cat. 109), and also in the painting *The Netherlandish Proverbs* (fig. 54). They seem to have been in widespread use as shutters. Until just a few years ago, there were “hor” shutters on the farmhouse at the Open-Air Museum Bokrijk, but these are now in storage.

## 2. “Vat”

Barrels, *vaten* in Dutch, typically have a variety of uses but in Bruegel’s day they were mainly used for beer (*bierton*), wine (*wijnvat*) or as containers for all kinds of items. In *Gluttony*, there is a goblin drinking beer in front of a big barrel, with a cup in his right hand and a pitcher in his left hand. In *Charity* (fig. 55, cat. 49), pouring beer from the barrel and handing the drinks out to the poor is depicted as an “act of mercy.” The poor, however, without mugs to receive the beer, come with round porridge or soup bowls instead. According to Weyns, beer was commonly drunk at breakfast, lunch



fig. 55 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “Bierton” (detail of *Charity*) 1559, cat. 49



fig. 56 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “Barrel used a container for salted meat” (detail of *Prudence*) 1559, cat. 52



fig. 57 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “Barrel stuffed with coins” (detail of *The Fight over Money*) after 1570, cat. 78



fig. 58 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “Barrel used as a see-saw” (detail of *Children's Games*) 1560, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



fig. 59 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “Sitting inside a half-cut barrel” (detail of *Temperance*) c. 1560, cat. 54



fig. 60 “Barrel of human manure”, The Open-Air Museum Bokrijk

and dinner. A survey from 1419 lists the average annual consumption of beer in Lier as 425 liters per person.<sup>20</sup> In Antwerp, as clean drinking water was not readily available, orphanage children were given, it seems, low alcohol beer instead. The barrel in *Prudence* (fig. 56, cat. 52), is being used a container for salted meat, a “pekelvat.” In *The Kermis at Hoboken or Temperance* (cat. 54), a performance is going on in the square but the stage is a makeshift affair of planks on top of big barrels. Barrels had also been used historically as receptacles for transporting money. During the Hundred Year’s War (1337–1453), counterfeit money was taken to France from Liege in a barrel.<sup>21</sup> *The Fight over Money* (cat. 78) (published after 1570, fig. 57) shows a barrel, a large sack and jars stuffed with coins. Lebeer’s interpretation is that this print represents a metaphor for the social, political and economic conditions of the time and “an intense battle for power through small-scale frugality.”<sup>22</sup> However, it seems that the containers of money can be interpreted as Bruegel’s satire on human greed for money in general rather than on big capital and small business. The Dutch inscription reads, “You Money Boxes, Barrels and Wooden Chests! This fighting and quarreling is all about money and goods.....” Given that the habit at the time was to store money in various kinds of containers, the different sizes and types of receptacles in this print would have no allegorical meaning concerning financial power; therefore an interpretation of the “battle of financial capitalism” would not be acceptable.

Barrels in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were prized as vessels to transport books and prints. They were also used as chairs during the winter season, offering protection from the cold. In *Temperance*, the assistant to the merchant doing ‘accounting’ is sitting inside of half cut barrel (fig. 59). In the painting *Children’s Games*, we can see an old barrel used as a see-saw (fig. 58), and children enjoying hearing the resonance of their voices in an empty barrel. We can also see that up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century barrels were used to carry human and livestock excrement intended for fertilizer (fig. 60).

## 3. “rondeel” (modern Dutch, een ronde tafel, three-legged table), “driehoeckige schamel” (modern Dutch, een driebeinige stoel, three-legged chair), ‘kogelpot’ (three-legged pot)

Because the farmhouses had dirt floors, much of the furniture and the pots and utensils that would come into direct contact with the floor had tripod arrangements for stability. Round tables were especially



fig. 62 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, “People at a round table” (detail of *The Moorge Kichen*) 1563, cat. 75

fig. 61 Simon Bening, “January: Dining of nobles”, *Da Costa Book of Hours*, c. 1515, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum





fig. 63 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Three-legged stool" (detail of *The Fat Kitchen*) 1563, cat. 76



fig. 64 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Simple three-legged stool" (detail of *The Meagre Kitchen*) 1563, cat. 75



fig. 65 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Ice-skating with a three-legged stool" (detail of *The Numbering at Bethlehem*) 1567, oil, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België



fig. 66 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Child with an overturned pot with three feet" (detail of *The Alchemist*) c. 1558, cat. 73

avored because it was possible to seat more people than at a square table with its corners, and because everyone was equal distance from and could easily reach the plates at the center of the table. As the tabletop was placed on shores, it was also easy to dismantle. There is a proverb, "Een ronde tafel weert den twist want elck in alle schotels vist," meaning that a round table prevents conflict because everyone has an equal chance to get the food.<sup>20</sup> In Flemish calendars of the first half of the 16th century, *January* (fig. 61) was often illustrated with the dining of nobles, and from those scenes we know round tables were very popular in those days. Bruegel's *The Meagre Kitchen* (cat. 75) shows five lean people at a round table eating mussels (fig. 62).

Chairs were also made with three legs for balance. In *The Fat Kitchen* (cat. 76), we see overweight people on expensive three-legged chairs (fig. 63) while in *The Meagre Kitchen*, peasants are sitting on simple three-legged stools (fig. 64). In Bruegel's painting *The Numbering at Bethlehem*, a youngster astride a three-legged stool is ice-skating (fig. 65). In *The Netherlandish Proverbs*, "to sit between two stools in the ashes," is illustrated by a chair with a backrest and a simple chair without one. In *The Alchemist* (cat. 73), there is a pot with three short legs directly on the dirt floor, but also a child with an overturned pot with three legs on his head (12). The empty pot is a metaphor for poverty, being too poor to have any food at home.

#### 4. "mes" (knife)

In *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (cat. 88), there is a man with a huge knife, cutting the big fish open (fig. 67). Since this kind of serrated knife did not exist at the time, it is totally the "creation" of Bruegel.<sup>20</sup> Knives were usually small like the one in the hat of the goblin in the foreground of *Sloth* (fig. 68, cat. 41). The way the steel blade is inserted up to the end of the handle reveals the structure of a high quality of knife of the time. These were extremely stable, with metal rivets at several locations on the handle. Looking closely, we see a



fig. 67 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Serrated Knife" (detail of *Big Fish Eat Little Fish*) 1557, cat. 88



fig. 68 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Knife" (detail of *Sloth*) 1558, cat. 41

sandwich-like structure, with the blade positioned between the two sides of the wooden handle. In cheap knives, a short steel rod, which easily separated from the handle, was simply inserted into the top of the handle. For example, the knives in *The Fat Kitchen* or *The Meagre Kitchen* have only one rivet fixed to the handle, and presumably each blade is rather short. It is thus very clear that Bruegel strictly differentiated the types of knife according to the theme of his drawing.

#### 5. "eetlepel" (portable spoon)

There are many depictions of "eetlepel," portable wooden spoons, stuck into hats in Bruegel's works. Stridbeck and other scholars interpreted this as a symbol of "gluttony."<sup>20</sup> However, putting a spoon in one's hat seems to have been a common custom at the time and probably Bruegel is not trying to illustrate any particular allegorical meaning with it. Examples in prints are seen in the big adult-sized hat of the child in *The Ass at School* (fig. 69, cat. 71), or the brimmed hat of a



fig. 69 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Spoon stuck into hat" (detail of *The Ass at School*) 1557, cat. 71



fig. 70 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Spoon stuck into hat" (detail of *Charity*) 1559, cat. 49



fig. 71 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Spoon stuck into hat" (detail of *The Peasant Wedding*) c. 1568, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



fig. 72 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Spoon stuck into hat" (detail of *The Peasant Dance*) c. 1568, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



fig. 73 Pieter van der Borcht, "Spoon stuck into hat" (detail of *Peasant Wedding Feast in the Open Air*) 1560, cat. 118



person receiving bread in *Charity* (fig. 70, cat. 49) and, in a painting, the hat of the waiter carrying vlaai (a kind of tart) in *The Peasant Wedding* (c. 1568, fig. 71). In the painting *The Peasant Dance* (c. 1568), the bluish metallic (perhaps tin) spoon attached to the hat of the middle-aged peasant (fig. 72) in the foreground of the composition is probably a special spoon. Aside from in Bruegel's works, we can also see examples of portable spoons in Pieter van der Borch's *The Peasant Wedding* (1560, cat. 118), where a peasant seated at the right foreground has a spoon on his hat (fig. 73). In summary, as a sufficient number of spoons at the time were not always available at village pubs and private homes for visitors, peasants had the habit of carrying around their own spoons.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. "hoofddoek" (headkerchiefs)

When going to a wedding or a village fair many peasant women would arrange a scarf on their head with some ingenuity. According to tradition they always had to wear kerchiefs on their heads, except at their own weddings, and they tied them in fashionable ways for special occasions. We can see from *The Kermis at Hoboken* (fig. 74, cat. 109) where all the head-dresses are fashioned in about the same



fig. 74 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Headkerchiefs" (detail of *The Kermis at Hoboken*) cat. 109



fig. 75-a



fig. 75-b



fig. 75-c



fig. 75-d

fig. 75-a, b, c, d Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Headkerchiefs" (detail of *The Wedding Dance in the Open Air*) 1566, oil, Detroit, Institute of Arts



fig. 76 Pieter Bruegel the Elder and his Circle, *Peasant Wedding Dance in the Open Air*, after 1570, cat. 111

way, that Bruegel was not much interested in this head covering in his early period. However, in the painting *The Wedding Dance* (1566), Bruegel put focus on the variety of unique peasant kerchiefs: folding it up on the head (fig. 75a), tying it back (fig. 75b), binding it at shoulder length, folding it short around the jaw-line, binding it at chin-length (fig. 75 c) or wearing it with the tips stiffened in a triangle shape (fig. 75 d). The print *Peasant Wedding Dance in the Open Air* (fig. 76, cat. 111) was issued by Cock's widow in 1570 after Bruegel's death in 1569 and inscribed P.BRUEGEL.INVENT. Without doubt, several dancing couples, two musicians and a single standing person who is apparently a townsman in the foreground, are "quotations" from the painting. However, it is unconceivable that Bruegel "copied" those figures after his own painting. Also Bruegel had possibly nothing to do with the bride group in the background, and a follower of Bruegel might have added them, namely, villagers bringing bridal gifts in the manner of Bruegel. From this point of view, it is obvious that depictions of the head coverings in the Bride group are less detailed and less complicated than those of Bruegel's dancing women peasants (See the drawings and comment by Prof. Yamazaki with the description of the print, cat. 111.)

## 7. Fortresses as landscape accent; ruins and castles

Bruegel was interested in placing fortresses, old castles and ruins in his landscape paintings as points of accent, regardless of the subject of his works. His enthusiasm toward them already started in one of his earliest drawings, *Landscape with Fortified City* (1553, fig. 77), that also demonstrates his tremendous talent at an early age for representing



fig. 77 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Landscape with Walled Town*, 1553, drawing, London, British Museum



fig. 78 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Fortress on the mountain" (detail of *Landscape with the Parable of the Sower*) 1557, oil, San Diego, California, Timken Museum of Art





fig. 79 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Fortress on the mountain" (detail of *Penitent Magdalene*) c. 1555-56, cat. 8



fig. 80 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Fortress on the mountain" (detail of *The Suicide of Saul*) 1562, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

architectural structures, as evident in the depiction of the wall surrounding the city, and several residences and large and small fortresses in the hills and high mountains. Previous studies on Bruegel have not paid enough attention to how ruins of castles and fortresses in his drawings and prints reappear as important pictorial elements later in his many paintings. Yet it would probably not be very meaningful to identify the existing ruins or fortresses with those monuments in Bruegel's works – for example the 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries Bouillon Citadel, or the 14<sup>th</sup> century Beersel Castle. Probably the



fig. 81 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Castle on the water" (detail of *The Flight into Egypt*) c. 1555-56, cat. 17



fig. 82 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Castle in the water" (detail of *The Gloomy Day*) 1565, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



fig. 83 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "City with Fortress" (detail of *Netherlandish Wagon*) c. 1555-56, cat. 15

special characteristics of the castles and towers depicted have changed, with renovations or alterations during the centuries. There is also the possibility that Bruegel added his own creative touches to what he observed: citadels on hillocks in Walloon region or castles and water castles in Flanders or on the way in his travels to Italy passing through France. Probably Bruegel, who was as an artist always impressed by castles, made sample drawings and adapted them in his landscape drawings for prints and paintings. Looking over Bruegel's works as a whole, it would be hard to find landscape compositions without any castles or fortresses. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until around the early 1990s, it is estimated that over 2000 castles in Belgium have vanished,<sup>27</sup> so one can guess just how prevalent castles must have been as part of the natural landscape in Bruegel's time.

In the early landscape print *Soldiers at Rest* (cat. 14), a citadel dominates an entire rocky hill, while in the painting *The Parable of the Sower* (1557, fig. 78) a clearly rising citadel and one in the mist behind it stand in the right mid-ground. In the case of *Penitent Magdalene* (1555, fig. 79), there are citadels in two positions but one is in the lower mountain buried in the natural surroundings. In the painting *The Suicide of Saul* (1562, fig. 80), however, the monumental citadel in the distance is an effective accent in contrast to the countless soldiers in the composition. The castle on the water that appears in the print *The Flight into Egypt* (fig. 81) seems to not be the same exact one, but this type of edifice appears in the painting *The Gloomy Day* (1565, fig. 82). There, the floor of the water castle in the painting is flooded with an early spring storm and swell of the river, appropriately illustrating the motif of the harsh season. A small fortress dominating a rocky hill in the distance, such as in the painting *The Haymaking* (fig. 4) in the "Seasons" series, is an element that did not appear previously in the prints, but since all corners of the vast space are filled with meaningful motifs, it might be the emergence of a new Bruegel composition element. The castle in the mid-ground of the print *Netherlandish Wagon* (fig. 83, cat. 15) is the foundation of the structural concept of the distant fortress in *The Haymaking*. In this way, many castles and ruined fortresses were added to the prints and such motifs were positioned in the paintings as picturesque attraction.

## VI. Children's Play Depicted in the Prints

Bruegel's painting *Children's Games* (1560) is an early monumental work with an encyclopedic depiction of 91 types of play. However, Bruegel had portrayed children's play in various prints before the completion of this painting. In *The Kermis at Hoboken* (cat. 109), for example, boys are throwing ball-like objects at a knife standing as a target in a circle line in the ground (fig. 84). To the side, two little children are happily walking around hand in hand with a jester. The "head to rear-end somersault" in the print *The Kermis of Saint George's Day* (cat. 110), does not appear in the painting *Children's Games*, but the children playing on a swing in the barn (fig. 85) reappear in the painting (fig. 86) swinging dangerously from a rope fastened to a beam on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. In the print, a young boy and girl, maybe brother and sister, are riding a hobbyhorse together (fig. 87), but in the painting (fig. 88) a boy alone plays knight on a hobbyhorse. The "children chasing a jester" in Bruegel's print (fig. 89) is copied by his son, Jan Brueghel the Elder, in his painting





fig. 84 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Throwing Balls at a knife" (detail of *The Kermis at Hoboken*) cat. 109



fig. 85 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Swing" (detail of *The Kermis of Saint George*).

fig. 86 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Swing" (detail of *Children's Games*) 1560, oil, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



fig. 87 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Hobbyhorse" (detail of *The Kermis of Saint George*) c. 1560, cat. 110

Village Festival (fig. 90). In *Skaters before the Gate of St. George* (1558–1559, cat. 112), young children are sliding on the ice using the lower horse jawbone as a sleigh (a lower horse jawbone is flat and good for ice sliding) (fig. 91). Bruegel was fond of scenes of children skating and the motif appears also in the painting *Adoration of the Magi in Winter Landscape* (1567, fig. 92). In the case of *The Numbering of Bethlehem* (1566), the horse jawbone is more realistically painted in the copy (fig. 93) by Bruegel's son Pieter.

Thus, Bruegel prints depicted individual children's play while in *Children's Games* he collected and recorded many and various types of play to allude to an allegory of childhood<sup>20</sup> as well as to the physical and mental significance of play in childhood. Bruegel was probably impressed by Johannes Ludowicus Vives and other humanists of the period.<sup>20</sup>

## VII. Concepts of Humanism Fostered in Bruegel Prints

*Everyman* (Elck), one of Bruegel's most representative prints of moral lessons moves our attention to Bruegel's observation of the nature of

fig. 89  
Pieter Bruegel the Elder,  
"Children chasing a jester"  
(detail of *The Kermis of Saint George*) 1560, cat.  
110



fig. 90  
Jan Brueghel the Elder,  
"Children chasing a  
jester" (detail of *The Kermis*) oil, Windsor,  
Royal Collection



fig. 91 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Jawbone of a horse as a sleigh" (detail of *Skating in front of Saint George's Gate, Antwerp*) c. 1558–59, cat. 112



fig. 92 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "Jawbone of a horse as a sleigh" (detail of *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow*) 1567, oil, Winterthur, Sammlung Oskar Reinhart



fig. 93 Pieter Brueghel the Younger, "Jawbone of a horse as a sleigh" (detail of *Numbering at Bethlehem*), oil, Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts

human behavior. What Bruegel wants to alert us to in this work is presented through three Dutch proverbs on "human egotism and ignorance." According to the Dutch inscription in the margin of the other edition of the first version of *Elck* (fig. 94) the first Dutch proverb is "Elck soect hem seluen in alderley saken" (Everyman seeks his own in all kinds of things) implies "self-centered narcissism and egoism." The second proverb is "Elck trekt oock om dancste" (Everyman pulls also for the longest end), much like the first proverb, means also that one tries to gain material things as much as possible. The third proverb, "Niemāt en kent hē selvē" (No one knows himself) signifies man is unaware of himself. This last proverb is illustrated "in the picture within the picture" in the background,



where a jester holds a mirror reflecting the face of a fool.

Eight persons appear in the allegorical scene, and the inscription "Elck" is written in the hems of the garments of seven of them. Among them, five old men foolishly light a lantern in daylight. Four of them are either inside barrels, or bent over with their heads in baskets, bags, or sacks, searching through household objects like calculating tools and games scattered on the ground. They are, after all, looking for worldly goods for their own profit. However, "Everyman" cannot find anything among them. An army camp also offers nothing. Finally, "Everyman" arrives at a church, the ground of Christian faith.<sup>30</sup>

The source of the theme of *Everyman* was assumed to be the Dutch morality play *Elckenijck* (*Everyman*).<sup>31</sup> The manuscript of this play was originally printed in c. 1496 in Delft, and it was sometimes attributed to Pieter Doorlant of Dordrecht, although there is still a debate about the authorship. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition was published around 1525 in Antwerp, and Bruegel was most probably aware of it. The story of the play is, in short, that "Death" visits Everyman, telling him that his life is about to close. With no choice, Everyman goes on a pilgrimage towards death. He looks for a companion among personifications of "Company," "Relatives," "Property," "Virtue" and its sister "Wisdom." As "Virtue" had not yet reached a high enough point, it suggests that Everyman tried asking "the Confessor" to accompany him. Next, Everyman approaches "Power," "Beauty," "Pleasure," "The Five Senses," but all refuse when they know Everyman is on the path to death. Finally, "Virtue" and "Wisdom" encourage him and an angel comes to fetch him.

Bruegel's *Everyman* appears to have little in common with this allegorical play of the Middle Ages, but Everyman's final salvation through the virtue of faith resembles the appearance of the angel at the end of the play.

Four years after *Everyman* (1559), "Elck" was chosen as the theme song of the "Ommegang" (circumambulation) in Antwerp in 1563. This procession takes place every year on August 15 to celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The beginning verses of the

procession song are: "Everyman, listen/ people who are not satisfied with themselves!/ You use feet and hands to pull the longest end/ thus, your heart is filled with hate and envy/ you desire far more than you need./ This is how you are your worst tormenter./ Listen well to my words, Everyman, any man/ why do you do that to yourself?/ When this happens/ you think all is "something."/ To someone all is "naught"/ because these things happen." If we read the prose carefully, the three proverbs inscribed on Bruegel's *Elck* print are also related to the performance of art vivant (living art) on the seven procession floats. For example, the first float has the placard "Everyman pulls the longest until gaining the last smallest profit. That's why he tortures himself and loses his time." Floats are drawn by personifications of "Worldly Wealth" and its handmaiden "Desire for Authority" riding on horseback. Sitting on top of the float are the personifications of "Greed," "Self Interest," and "Vanity" as art vivant. On the side are an old man and a youth struggling and pulling to get the longer end of a silk girdle. Such is the extent to which the 1563 "Ommegang" is indebted to Bruegel's *Everyman*. Further, *Everyman* seems to have been accepted as a general social phenomenon. Aside from *Everyman*, Bruegel also demonstrated human greed, folly, ignorance, and deception in *The Alchemist* (c. 1558, cat. 73) and *The Witch of Mallegem* (1559, cat. 74), and these subjects are relevant to Sebastian Brandt's late 15<sup>th</sup> century *Ship of Fools* (1494) and in *Praise of Folly* (1509) by Erasmus.

The world of various human sins came later as one of Bruegel's main concepts in the paintings, but originated in his iconographical concepts of the *Seven Deadly Sins* print series (1558). I would like to analyze below the relation of some of the prints in the series to Bruegel's paintings.

Pride, from the time of Pope Gregory in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, had been considered blasphemy against God and therefore was considered as the top sinful vice among all the others by Gregory the Great.<sup>32</sup> In the print *Pride*, (cat. 39), the vice is portrayed allegorically as monsters squirming in Hell because of blasphemous behavior towards God. "Pride" also dominantly appears as a theme in the two remarkable paintings of *The Tower of Babel*, where God's anger towards their pride causes thousands of workers to toil for years in vain while the tower remains unfinished as a consequence of their folly.

The print *Avarice* (cat. 38) portrays that vice as one of the most censured crimes of the time. Therefore various methods of punishment for the greedy appear in this print. The men are aiming at a big purse hanging by a rod on the top of a hut in the center of the print composition, but at the same moment a man dressed like a monk is in turn being targeted by a pickpocket. Greed is also an important theme in the painting *Dulle Griet* (*Malicious Griet*) (1561) where a monster human is ladling out coins from the hip. All the housewives around are flocking there, exposing their greed. Behind the scenes, there is an apocalyptic explosion.

The print *Anger* (cat. 40) became a sub-theme of *Dulle Griet*. Griet, the heroine, is furiously rushing towards Hell in order to pillage Hell with an arsenal of kitchen utensils as weapons. Her housewife followers act out the proverb "to tie the devil to a cushion," but this has been interpreted as a metaphor for dominant wives in the home.

The print *Sloth* (cat. 41) is composed with a strange array of weird characters, from motionless people eating lying down, to erotic figures, gamblers, and even a giant who leave his own defecation to



fig. 94 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Everyman*, c. 1558



others. In the painting *The Land of Cockaigne* (1567) a clergyman (or a clerk) represents prayer; a knight represents fighting and a farmer, labor. The intended meaning is that laziness may exist at all levels of society. *The Land of Cockaigne* illustrates a Dutch proverb, "The roof is covered by vraaien (tarts)" with humor and satire.

There have been various theories on how Bruegel portrayed peasants in his works. David Kunzle was one of many art historians to propose the interpretation that the lower classes are "in some sense the true source of irrational and foolish behavior."<sup>33</sup> However, even looking at the "Vices" series, the world of humans, or everyman, is presented, and this is not a world intended to be exclusively the domain of the peasant. Among various sinful behaviors depicted in the painting *The Netherlandish Proverbs*, we can catalogue the follies, weaknesses, failures, ignorance, deceit and, from time to time, wisdom, of all ages, all social strata and all walks of life through the representation of nearly 100 proverbs. At the time, proverbial prints and paintings were referred to as 'Blue Cloak' and their meaning was to be found in inscriptions in the margins or written next each proverbial image of prints.<sup>34</sup> At the upper part of Frans Hogenberg's print *Blue Cloak* (cat. 105), illustrating 43 proverbs, the Dutch inscription reads: 'It is widely called The Blue Cloak, but it is more suitable to name it the abuses of the world.' As it was published in c. 1558, about one year before Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* painting (1559), it could have been a pictorial source of inspiration for Bruegel. In an anonymous work called *Blue Cloak* published in the 1570's, the following words appear that clearly spell out the purpose of the morality prints: "Look at all the world totally up-side down/ I mean proverbs which men learn./ How it goes around in the world/ Of all types of people." Keith Moxey once pointed out that *The Netherlandish Proverbs* was a work to satisfy feelings of superiority of the urban upper classes and to keep their distance from the peasant classes.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, Bruegel, with his sharp sense of observation and the power of his distinguished creation, rather appealed to the universal problems of human nature.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

Generally, with the exception of the Manfred Sellink's recent publication *Bruegel* (2007),<sup>37</sup> Bruegel prints and paintings have been studied separately, and the relevance of their reciprocal influence has not been much explored. The present paper, focusing on motifs, iconography and compositions depicted in Bruegel prints and discussing the artist's observations of nature, man, popular folk culture and other elements, points out how Bruegel prints (more specifically, the preparatory drawings for the prints) inspired his paintings, or the reverse case, although examples of influences of his paintings in his prints are few. In terms of chronology, Bruegel first of all produced drawings for prints and after that became active as painter. Compositions with the grandeur of large landscapes, numerous human figures and a rich array of expression of movement, or new concepts and allegories, which developed and matured during his period as a draughtsman of prints seem to have reached full bloom in the paintings. For example, themes in the prints such as reverence for the Alpine landscape, or moral criticism of human society, as in *Everyman*, or the recreation and hard work of peasants, as in *Summer*, or children immersed in play and enjoying festivals, "reappeared" in his paintings. Bruegel thus could gain immeasurable

experience from his prints. However his concept of children's games did not reach a sufficient level of expression during the print period, although Bruegel placed children's play as distinct from the activity of adults at fairs, he soon produced his monumental painting *Children's Games* after his rich experience contributed by the prints.

The portrayals of Hell and monsters and demon creatures in Bruegel print series *The Seven Deadly Sins* are decidedly close to those of Hieronymus Bosch. However, in the case of the paintings, Bruegel broke away from the style of Bosch and was able to invent monsters and motifs composed of and combined from items of everyday life in his own style. The secularized creatures are a bit comical and somehow familiar, and the personification of vices is of "this world" rather than of "Hell." It is precisely because of the encounter with Bosch-style in his early print period that Bruegel was able to unveil his own distinctive style in his paintings.

It is also possible to reconstruct from an existing print what the composition of a lost painting, such as *Spring* from the "Seasons" series, and its depiction of farmers at work, might have been.

Needless to say, there is some overlap in the period of Bruegel the draughtsman and Bruegel the painter, making it difficult to definitively discuss the relationship of the two, but it may be meaningful to consider the print period as preparatory for the production of paintings. It may be very important for us also to investigate in the future how Bruegel's deep lifelong interests were cultivated in his prints and how the prints played an influential role in his paintings, that is, in shaping his subjects related to Flemish popular culture, the moral concepts of the humanists, and the literary activities of his contemporaries, the Rederijkers (rhetoricians).

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[Translated by Cheryl A. Silverman]

## Notes

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- 2) Teiichi Hijikata, ed., *Exposition des estampes de Peter Bruegel l'ancien* (in Japanese), Tokyo 1974.
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  - 10) Lebeer, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-205.
  - 11) Jan Van der Stock, "The Impact of the Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder," pp. 89-102 (see footnote 7).
  - 12) *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Knt, ed. Malone, London 1797, II. p. 112.
  - 13) Lorne Campbell, *The Early Flemish Pictures*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 13-19.
  - 14) Christoph Plantin purchased quite a number of Bruegel prints from Cock, and sold them through sales channels in France. See the following for details: A. J. J. Delen, *Histoire de la Gravure dans les Anciens Pays-Bas et dans les Provinces Belges*, Paris 1969, vol. 2, pp. 149-159; Yoko Mori, "Bruegel and the Golden Age of Antwerp," *Annual Report 2005* (in Japanese), Printing Museum, Tokyo 2007, pp. 53-64.
  - 15) Yoko Mori, "Hieronymous Bosh in Bruegel's Art," *Complete Paintings of Bruegel* (in Japanese), Tokyo 1988, pp. 193-203.
  - 16) The English translation of the Latin inscription is taken from René van Bastelaer, *The Prints of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, rev. ed., 1992. Susan Frago Gilchrist, p.268. I have discussed *Spring* in detail in the following: Yoko Mori, "On the iconographic traditions in the Flemish Books of Hours and Calendar Prints as seen in Bruegel's *Spring and Summer*" *The Bulletin of Arts and Sciences* (in Japanese), Meiji University, 1985, number 184, pp. 362-77. Mori (1995). *op. cit.*, pp. 14-58.
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  - 19) Weyns (1974), *op. cit.*, vol.3, pp. 784-786.
  - 20) *Ibid.*, vol.2, p. 577.
  - 21) I am thankful to Mr. Raf van Laere, former chairman of the Royal Belgian Institute for Ancient Coins, for this information.
  - 22) Lebeer, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
  - 23) Ms. Annick Boesman, former Director of the Open-Air Museum Bokrijk gave me information on this proverb.
  - 24) I am indebted to Mr. Johan David, Director of the Museum of Old Techniques, Grimbergen, for information on historical knife quality in Bruegel's time.
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  - 31) *Den Spygel der Salicheyt van Elckerijc*, *Hoort wat men u spelen zal*, ed., M. C. A. van der Heijden, Utrecht, Antwerpen 1973, pp. 233-282.
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  - 33) Kunzle, *op. cit.*, pp.197-202.
  - 34) Yoko Mori, "She Hangs the Blue Coak Over Her Husband", *The World of Human Follies in Proverbial Art*, Wolfgang Mieder, *The Netherlands Proverbs*, An Internationa Symposium on the Pieter Brueg(h)els, Vermont 2004, pp.71-102.
  - 35) Moxey, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
  - 36) Mori (See footnote 9).
  - 37) Manfred Sellink, *Bruegel, The Complete Paintings, Drawings and Prints*, Brugge 2007.