

## The Influence of German and Flemish Prints on the Works of Pieter Bruegel<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was, needless to say, the most original and creative artist among his contemporaries. However, in many of his works, we can trace back their stylistic origins, in other words, their pictorial sources, to his forerunners not only in his native country but also in other countries, i.e. Germany, Italy, France. In my opinion, these sources are to be classified as follows:

1. Flemish manuscripts: Some peasants' seasonal activities in the Book of Hours of Simon Bening can be found Bruegel's Months. His Children Games also found inspiration in the marginal decorations of Flemish manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>
2. The newly developed conception of nature and landscape in the early Netherlandish paintings such as those of Gerard David, Joachim Patenier, Jan de Cock, Jan Mostaert, Herri met de Bles, etc. It is clear that the strong Netherlandish tradition of the landscape is seen in Bruegel's paintings.
3. Hieronymus Bosch: Bruegel's early preparatory drawings for prints such as in the "Seven Vices", and his early paintings such as "the Adoration of the Magi" (Brussels), "Dulle Griet", etc. were influenced by Bosch.<sup>3</sup>
4. The Italian Renaissance (especially see Bruegel's later large figure compositions): Mantegna's modelling of the human body, or Raphael's composition, the landscapes of Titian, Campagnola, Girolamo Muziano, etc.
5. German and Flemish prints: German woodcuts such as those of Hans Holbein, Burgmaier, Erhard Schön, Heinrich Vogtherr, Georg Pencz, Hans Sebald Beham, etc., and Flemish engravings such as those of Cornelis Massys, Frans Hogenberg, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> See Mori, 1976 (Appendix article 25).

<sup>3</sup> See Mori, 1974 (Appendix articles 17, 18).

In this paper I plan to discuss the last-mentioned source namely the influence of German and Flemish prints on the works of Pieter Bruegel. An exhaustive study of all of Bruegel's pictorial sources would be too ambitious for the present, although it is my intention to study Bruegel's other sources in subsequent articles.

Vasari, the famous Italian biographer of the 16th century, often mentioned the prints of Flemish artists in his *Lives of Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Prints were the most wide spread works of art since they were easily carried from one country to another. In Dürer's *Tagebuch der Reise in die Niederlande* we can read that he carried on his journey many of his own engravings in order to use them as gifts.

Bruegel worked in the shop of Hieronymus Cock, "In de Vier Winden", as draughtsman for the engravings, and he might have had many occasions to study the German prints being sold at Cock's shop as well as Flemish prints being printed in the same shop. L. Lebeer explains the relationship between German artists, especially the so-called *Kleinmeisters* in Nuremberg, and Flemish artists as follows: "Pourquoi (Bruegel) ne les aurait-il pas connues, puisqu'il est certain qu'entre autres les estampes des Petits Maîtres allemands de la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle—tel un H.S. Beham—étaient connues en Flandre, notamment à Anvers." (Louis Lebeer, *Catalogue raisonné des estampes de Pierre Bruegel l'ancien*, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 88.)



I The adoration of the Magi, tempera on canvas, ca. 1556, Brussels, Musées Royaux de Beaux Arts de Belgique (Fig. 1)

Bruegel painted this subject three times in his life (the other two are now in London, National Gallery and in Winterthur, Oscar Reinhart Collection). The Brussels' version has neither date nor signature and has been seriously damaged. Because of its poor state, there are some arguments concerning its date and authenticity. Some scholars, such as Jedlicka, assume that it is a later work of the artist (between 1562 and 1563). Tolnay doubts its originality and attributes it to the master's son, Jan Bruegel the Elder.<sup>4</sup> But the present writer is convinced that the Brussels' version is the earliest one among Bruegel's three versions of the "Adoration of the Magi", and it is an early work around 1556 from the stylistic point of view. For, as is usually observed in his earlier works, the Brussels Adoration displays a strong stylistic indebtedness to Hieronymus Bosch, namely, his Prado's triptych around 1495, especially the central panel of his altarpiece depicting the Adoration (Fig. 2). From this scene Bruegel has borrowed the high horizontal composition, the ruined hut supported by a dry tree trunk, the postures of the Madonna and the old King Balthasar and their prolonged bodies. And yet there are strong contrasts between both pictures. Bosch focused his Adoration on the Epiphany and filled it with medieval theological tradition. For instance, the golden gift of King Balthasar was engraved with the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac which is the prototype of the Crucifixion of Christ. The collar of King Melchior is embroidered with the figure of the Queen of Sheba bringing a gift to King Solomon, a prototype of the Adoration of the Magi. Also some scholars give various interpretations to the curious appearance of a naked person standing in the door of the ruined hut. L. Baldass thinks he is a leper because of his white skin and an open wound of his leg.<sup>5</sup> Lotte Brand Philip interprets him as the Antichrist,<sup>6</sup> while Fraenger thinks he is a witness of the Epiphany, Adam etc.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is clear to see that Bosch follows the medieval tradition on Epiphany. On the contrary, Bruegel does not represent any of those, and he is more concerned with representing common folk, who crowd around the hut in order to watch the sacred scene, with mixed adoration and curiosity. Bruegel succeeds in depicting mob psychology.

It should be noted that there is a triangular formation in the center. Did Bruegel invent the crowded composition and this triangular formation? There already existed a number of "Adoration of the Three Kings" with the representation of a crowd of people gathered about the Holy Family. Botticelli painted his Adoration around 1482 (Fig. 3) and Leonardo da Vinci made his unfinished Adoration (Fig. 4) also about the same time, and both painters have the triangular formation in the center, with numerous adorers on both sides.

Fritz Grossmann points out the close affinity between the Brussels' Adoration and a tapestry, a part of the so-called second Vatican series, designed by the School of Raphael around 1520-1531 (Fig. 5). "In der Gesamtanordnung der großen Figurenmenge, die sich um die zentrale Hütte drängt".<sup>8</sup> He

<sup>4</sup> Charles de Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien*, Bruxelles. 1935, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Baldass, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Wien, 1945, p. 245-248.

<sup>6</sup> Lotte. B. Philip, "The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch", *Art Bulletin* XXXV, 4. December, 1953, p. 267-293.

<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Fraenger, "Der vierte König des Madrider Epiphaniast Altar von Hieronymus Bosch", *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, III, 1957, p. 169-198.

<sup>8</sup> Fritz Grossmann, "Bruegels Verhältnis zu Raffael - und zur Raffael Nachfolge", *Festschrift Kurt Badt, Berlin*, 1961, p. 139.

also calls attention to many of Bruegel's early preparatory drawings such as the "Seven Vices" when the spatial arrangements were influenced by Raphael and his School. After reading the article by Grossmann, I found an engraving after a cartoon of this tapestry (Fig. 6) which was printed by Bruegel's employer Hieronymus Cock. On the left lower side is inscribed: *Cock excudebat*. And on the right lower side there is an *R*, an initial of Raphael. This engraving is closer to the Brussels' Adoration by Bruegel than the tapestry suggested by Grossmann and therefore I am inclined to propose it as a pictorial source.



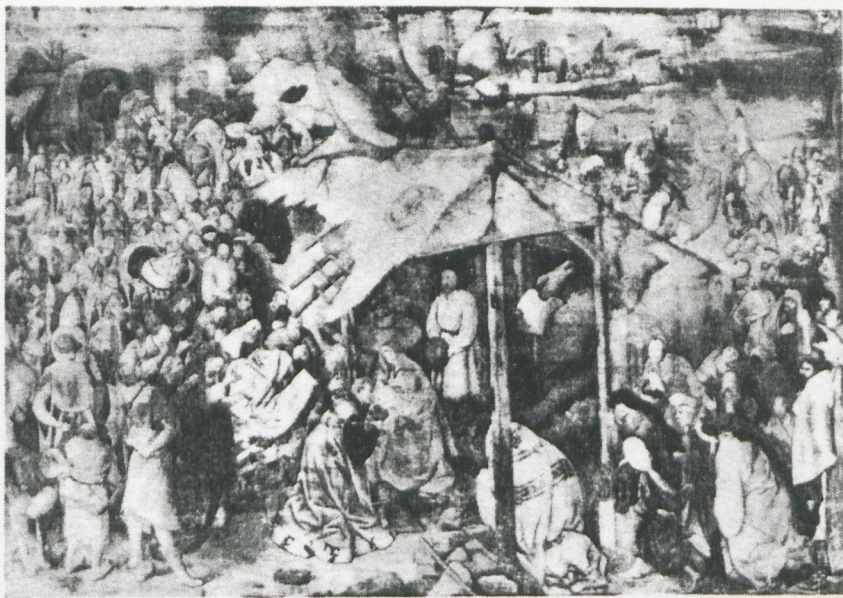


Fig. 1. Pieter Bruegel, the Adoration of the Magi, tempera on canvas, ca. 1556 Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux Arts de Belgique.



Fig. 2. Hieronymus Bosch, the Adoration of the Magi, oil on panel, central panel of the triptych, Madrid, Prado.



Fig. 3. Botticelli, the Adoration of the Magi, oil on panel, ca. 1482, Washington, National Gallery of Art, Mellon Collection.



Fig. 4. Leonardo Da Vinci, The Adoration of the Magi, oil on panel, Florence.





Fig. 5. The School of Raphael, tapestry, the Adoration of the Magi, 1520–1531, Vatican, Sala di Consistorio.



Fig. 6. Engraving after the cartoon of the School of Raphael, the Adoration of the Magi, printed by H. Cock.



II Netherlandish Proverbs, oil on panel, 1559, Berlin-Dahlem, Staatliche Museen. (Fig. 7, 8)

In 1971, the Royal Library of Brussels purchased the left half of an engraving of "Die Blau Huicke" (the blue cloak) of Frans Hogenberg which had been known only by the right half until the study of L. Lebeer's "De Blauwe Huyck" in 1939/40.<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 9). This print was made on two different copper plates and put together afterwards as one composition. Lebeer assumes that Hogenberg engraved it in 1558, namely, one year before Bruegel's painting of Netherlandish Proverbs. If this is true, his print could have provided a model for Bruegel's painting.

Frans Hogenberg was the son of Nicolaas Hogenberg, described by Karel van Mander as a "High-German painter". Nicolaas was born ca. 1500 in Munich and died in 1544 in Mechelen. His son Frans, both draughtsman and engraver, worked for a certain time at the shop of Hieronymus Cock. In Cologne Frans-engraved the work of the famous cartographer, Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. It should be remembered that Ortelius was a good friend of Bruegel and a collector of his works.

Hogenberg's "Die Blau Huicke" illustrates altogether 42 proverbs of which 32 were also illustrated by Bruegel. According to Jan Grauls<sup>10</sup>, we can count 85 proverbs in the painting of Bruegel. When investigating the date of Hogenberg's print, Lebeer dates it in 1558 on the basis of the following documents:

1. According to the archives of a leading publisher in Antwerp of the 16th century, named Christopher Plantin, Martin the younger, a book-seller in Paris received in 1558 from the shop of Plantin, three pieces of "De Blauwe Huyck". Martin the younger mentioned this print as "1 Baieur après, le manteau bleu painté" in his letter to Plantin of Oct. 18, 1558.
2. In 1559 Plantin sent to Barthélémy Jourdain a book-seller in Paris, "2 blauw huycke".
3. On the 29th of December 1568, Cock supplied to Plantin "2 Blau Huickes a 1-1/2 piece—3s".

From these documents we cannot be sure whether the prints being supplied by Cock were the same as those which were sent by Plantin to Martin the younger in 1558 and Barthélémy Jourdain in 1559. The earliest dated print of *De Blauwe Huyck* was that of Joannes van Doetechum in 1577 (Fig. 10). However *De Blauwe Huyck* of Hogenberg is stylistically earlier than that of Doetechum, and the former could have served as model for the latter. The composition of Hogenberg is also very close to his "Fight between Carnival and Lent" dated 1558, which was printed by Hieronymus Cock. Therefore, it could be possible that Plantin might have sent Hogenberg's *Blauwe Huyck* to Paris in 1558.

When Nicolaas Hogenberg died in 1539, his widow married Hendrik Terbruggen, an able cartographer, who had some business with the shop of Plantin in 1558. Hendrik could have been the person who sold the print of his step-son to Plantin.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Lebeer, "De Blauwe Huyck", *Gentsche Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, VI, 1939/40, p. 161-229.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en volksleven in het werk van P. Bruegel*, Antwerpen, Amsterdam, 1957, p. 77 ff.



But these documents and facts do not go beyond the hypothesis that Hogenberg made his *Blau Huicke* in 1558. Now we will discuss the stylistic comparison between the painting of Bruegel and the print of Hogenberg. In Bruegel's painting and Hogenberg's print there is a good accumulation of proverbs illustrated in a limited space with each one crowding another. Similar representations concerning postures, actions and instruments are seen. We follow the numbering of the illustration of the book of R.H. Marijnissen's *Bruegel*<sup>11</sup>. The numbers of proverbs, 7, 22, 23, 29, 55, 67, 82 and the corresponding proverbs in Hogenberg's print are quite similar.

However Bruegel surpasses Hogenberg in the over-all composition. For instance, the proverb, "hanging the blue coat round her husband" (n. 21) dominates Bruegel's composition in the center foreground, so that this group looks striking compared to the others. In fact this group (the *Blau Huicke*) tells the whole meaning of this painting, "topsy-turvy world". Hogenberg places the two figures on the left side of the foreground, so that they are almost inconspicuous among many others. Most of the representations of Hogenberg's proverbs have no particular relationship with the entire composition, for instance, "to catch an eel by its tail" (above the blue coat's group) takes place in a field, while Bruegel (n. 69) places the man in a hut, bending his body over a river, thus the eel is related to a river. Also, "if you let the dog in, it will run straight to the cupboard" (n. 6) as well as "to be sitting between two stools on the ashes" (n. 5) are found in Hogenberg's print also in the same field, while Bruegel depicts them in a farmer's house, where stools and pots are usually found. In short, Bruegel's composition has a meaningful comprehensive setting, while Hogenberg's proverbs in general bear no functional relationship with the background. Bruegel's interpretation of the proverbs seems sometimes deeper than Hogenberg's. For instance, let us study, "to fall off the ox onto the donkey" (n. 57). This proverb is meant to indicate a regression, to decline from the rich status to the poor, to fail in business. It also means to move from one topic to another like a weather-cock. Thus Bruegel emphasizes this regression when he makes a young man fall off the animals, while Hogenberg depicts a well-dressed man with sword jumping over two well-matched animals. His man does not look the victim of a bad situation, and the meaning of the proverb is lessened.

In addition, there are other literary sources for Bruegel's painting. A large number of books of proverbs had been published from the beginning of 16th century not only in the Netherlands but also in France, Germany, Italy, etc.<sup>12</sup> Rabelais' *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* should not be overlooked as a literary parallel to Bruegel's picture, especially in his "Fifth Book", chapter 22 of *Pantagruel*, "Comment les officiers de la Quinte diversement se exerceoient . . .". Since the Fifth book was published in 1564, it cannot be a source for Bruegel, however, among the publications of proverbs in France, Netherlands in Germany in the 15th and the 16th centuries are the following:

*Proverbia communia*, c. 1480, c. 1495. A 15th century collection of Dutch Proverbs, together with the Low German Version, ed. Jente, 1947.

Erasmus, *Adagiorum Collectanea*, Paris, 1500.

Heinrich Bebel, *Proverbia Germanica*, 1508.

Tunnicius, *Westfälische Sprichwörter*, 1513.

<sup>11</sup> Max Seidel und Roger H. Marijnissen, *Bruegel*, Stuttgart, 1969, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> This author is much indebted to Dr. Marijnissen for his information on these sources.



J. De La Vépie, *Proverbia gallicana*, Paris, 1519.

Caroli Bovilli Samarobrini, *Prouerbiorum Vulgarium*, 1531.

Sebastian Franck, *Sprichwörter*, 1541.

*Bonne Response à tous propos. Liure fort plaisant & delectable, auquel est contenu grand nombre de Prouerbes, & sentences ioyeuses...Traduict de la langue Italienne et reduty en nostre vulgaire françois par ordre d'alphabet*, Paris 1547.

*Seer schoone spreekwoorden/ oft Prouerbia / in Franchoyts ende Duytsch/ Motz tresbeaux ou dictons / et prouerbes en Franchoyts et Flammeng/* Antwerp, 1549.

*Ghemeene Duytsche Spreekwoorden*, Campen 1550.

G. Meurier, *Colloques ov novvelle invention de propos familiers...* Antwerp, 1557.

T.N. Zegerus, *Proverbia tevtonica latinitate donata...* Antwerp, 1563.

F. Goedthals, *Les proverbes anciens flamengs et françois correspondants de sentence les uns aux autres...*, Antwerp, 1568.

G. Meurier, *Thresor de sentences dorées*, Rouen, 1578.

J.B. Houwaert, (1533–1590), *Het Middelnederlandsch Woorden Boek*.

Moreover, people's interest in proverbs had increased since the beginning of the 16th century and especially their representation in art came into vogue during the second half of the 16th century. After the publication of Hogenberg's print and Bruegel's painting, many prints and paintings appeared of which I offer a partial list below.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This list is based partly on the study of Lebeer mentioned above.

artist	date	genre	number of proverbs	common to Bruegel	text	inscription
Pieter Bruegel	1559	painting	ca. 85			
A Flemish workshop	end of 15 c. or beginning of 16c.	tapestry (fragment)	8	6		
Frans Hogenberg	ca. 1558	etching and engraving	42	36	Flemish	Die Blav hvicke is dit meest ghenaeamt/maer des weerelts abvisen hem beter betaempt
Joannes a Doetinchum (van Doetechum)	1577	engraving	88	39	Flemish	De Blauwe Huycke, is dith meest ghenaeamt, Maer des Werelts Idel sprocken hem beeter betaemt
Anonymous	end of 16 c.	etching	71			
Anonymous	end of 16 c.	engraving	ca. 52			Siet hier de weirelt gansch verkeert/Ick mejne spreucken daer men leert Hoe't inde weirelt omme-gaet/Bij 't volck van alderhande staet. -L'Abus du monde ici voijez/Ou bien prouerbes ordonnez/Sur ce qui se fait chasque iour/ Tant par le peuple que par la cour.
Franciscus van den Hoeye	beginning of 17 c.	etching	71	39	Flemish	Die Blau Huicke is/dit meest ghenaeamt Maer des Werlts/abvisen hem beter betaemt.
Theodor Galle	after 1600	engraving	71	39	Flemish	Deze wtbeeldinghe wordt die Blauw Huyck genaemt/ Maer des Werelts abuysen haer beter betaemt.
Pieter Bruegel the younger	1607	painting	132	85		
Sebastian Vranex	beginning of 17 c.	painting	202	61	Flemish	Spreucken Van Swerels Misbruyck, Die men Noempt De Blauwe Huyck
Joannes Galle	after 1633	engraving	71	39	Flemish and French	Deze wtbeeldinghe wort die Blauw Huyck ghenaeamt/ Maer des Werelts abuysen haer beter betaemt-Le vray pourtraict des abus du monde renversé.
L. Fruytiers	1700	engraving	80	39	Flemish and French	Deze Wtbeeldinghe wordt die Blauwe Huyck ghenaeamt. Maer des Werelts ydel spreck woorden beter betaemt -Par ce dessin il est monstre les abus du monde renversé.





Fig. 7. Pieter Bruegel, *Netherlandish Proverbs*, oil on panel, 1558, Berlin - Dahlem, Staatliche Museen.

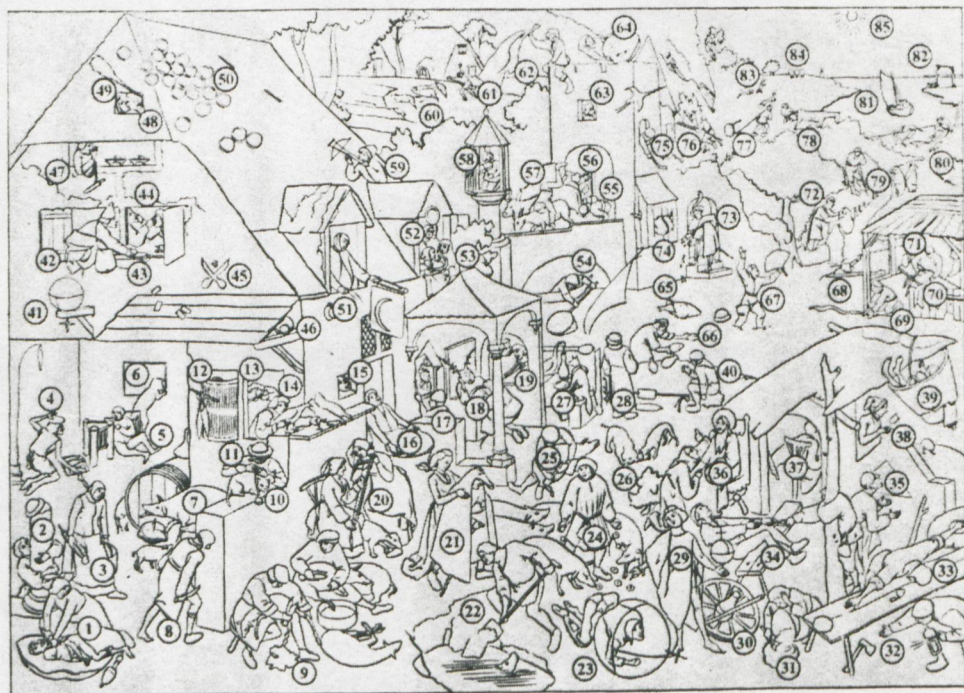


Fig. 8. Pieter Bruegel, *Netherlandish Proverbs* (trace), from R.H. Marijnissen's *Bruegel*, 1969.





Fig. 9. Frans Hogenberg, Die Blau Huicke, etching and engraving ca. 1558.



Fig. 10. Joannes a Doetinchum, engraving 1577.



### III *Elck* (Everyman), drawing, 1558, London, British Museum (Fig. 11).

Here eight old men wearing almost identical clothes are involved in seeking treasures among junk. Two are pulling at a long band, fighting each other and others stroll toward a church. Some of them wear glasses and hold lanterns. In the engraving after Bruegel's drawing (Fig. 13) the word "Elck" is inscribed either on the garments or under the feet of each person except the one inside a barrel. Concerning the picture, or probably its engraving, Vasari continues the description: "And an old man with a lantern seeks quiet amid the turmoil of the world but does not find it."<sup>14</sup>

In this paper, we will discuss mainly the picture which hangs at the top of the wall, namely, "the picture within the picture." (Fig. 12) For, as will be discussed later, this part shows a very close stylistic as well as iconographical similarity to German prints of "Niemand" (Nobody). In Bruegel's picture within the picture a fool holds a mirror and looks into it. He stands among junk, a bellows, a chair, a broken jug, etc. The picture has two very important inscriptions; the upper one reads "Nemo" (Nobody) in reverse, and the lower one reads "Niemand en kent hem selven", which Bruegel wrote, "Nijmant en ekent sij selven" (Nobody knows himself).

"Nobody knows himself" is also written in Flemish and in French in the engraving. (When the original publisher Hieronymus Cock printed it, he used only the Latin text, but Joannes Galle bought the copper plate after Cock's death and added the Flemish and French texts. They are "Niemand en kent schier hem selven niet" in Flemish and "Personne ne cognoit soy mesme" in French. "Niemand en kent hem selven" is nothing but a popular Flemish proverb.<sup>15</sup> It is a reminder of a famous ancient Greek oracle of Delphi, "Know thyself". Also we find the same expression in "Ballade des menus propos" of Villon: "Je cognois tout, fors que moy mesmes" (I know all, but myself).<sup>16</sup>

Jan Grauls explains that nearly all Flemings know the saying, "Als niet gekomen is tot iet, zoo en kent iet zich zelven niet" (when "niet" becomes "iet", "iet" does not know himself).<sup>17</sup> That is a kind of a play on words namely, if we remove "n" from the word "niet" (nothing), it is the word "iet" (something), with a completely different meaning. This saying is a variation of "Niemand en kent hem selven".

This proverb was so popular at the time that it was repeatedly cried by a fool at the *Landjuweel* (a regional competition for the rhetoricians) at Antwerp in 1561. This *Landjuweel* was organized by the chamber of the rhetoricians "Violieren". A fool from the chamber of "De Goudbloem" sitting on a bizarre horse, shouted to the public along the procession of his chamber, "Ick en kenne my selve niet" (I don't know myself). This is an attack on human folly and ignorance.

<sup>14</sup> Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. A. B. Hinds, New York 1963, vol. 3, p. 85 under the chapter on Marcantonio Bolonese.

<sup>15</sup> Jan Grauls says that there are two more proverbs in this *Elck*: *Elck soeckt hem selven* (Everyman seeks for himself) and *Elck treckt om dancsten* (Everyman pulls the band in order to get the longest part).

<sup>16</sup> In "Uit Bruegels Spreekwoorden", *Annuaire Royaux des Beaux-Arts Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, II, 1939, pp. 91-107.

<sup>17</sup> M. Seidel und R. Marijnissen, *Bruegel*, Stuttgart, 1969, p. 22.  
Jan Grauls, "Uit Bruegels Spreekwoorden", *op. cit.*, p. 106.



The same proverb was used at the "Ommegang" (a procession) in 1563 in Antwerp. In the programme of the "Ommegang" published by Hans de Laet, Antwerp,<sup>18</sup> the following text was written for the fourth wagon of the procession. "Elck soeckt hem selven en hy compt int verdriet. Om dat hy hem selven niet wel en besiet" (Everyman seeks for himself, and falls into danger, because he does not know himself well).

Würtenberger has uncovered some German prints of "Niemand" (Nemo, Nobody) which show pictorial sources for Bruegel's *Elck*. They are a table-top designed by Hans Holbein (Zürich, Schweizerisches Landmuseum) and broadsheets made by Erhard Schoen and Georg Pencz.<sup>19</sup> "Niemand" was also a very popular theme in the Nuremberg's broadsheets of the first half of the 16th century.

The study of Gerta Calmann, "The picture of Nobody",<sup>20</sup> offers a more precise analysis of the literary tradition of "Niemand" and of the history of its illustrations in Germany. A poem, "Niemand" was composed by Joerg Schan, a barber of Strassbourg about 1507. The first lines summarize the whole poem: "Nobody is my name; what everybody does, for that I am blamed."<sup>21</sup> When servants break a salt-box, jug, or any earthenware, or when young girls lose flax, spindles, distaff, or when an entire household is ruined because of the idleness or other wrong-doings of servants, if asked about their behaviour, they say: "Nobody, the ghost, has walked by night." In the earliest examples Nobody is represented as a wayfarer and wears a beggar-like torn coat indicating his low social status. His mouth is padlocked. Here we have a symbol of silence (Fig. 14), based upon the passage: "If my mouth were unlocked, How often it had annoyed me mightily / That many tell a great number of lies unashamedly. But a locked mouth is silent / And does not answer immediately, Since it will yet come to the light of day."<sup>22</sup> The man's cap has bird's wings, a symbol of a fool as is seen in the personification of Folly in Giotto's Arena Chapel in Padova.

He carries a pair of glasses on his nose, which has often meant deceit or ignorance. According to Verdam's *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, a pair of glasses, "bril" can also mean "billen" (deceive). He also holds a broken sword in his right hand, and is walking among junk, cracked jugs, a burned pot, a broken glass-window, etc.

Bruegel apparently borrows his *Nemo* from the German tradition. His *Nemo* stands also amidst debris broken by others. Yet he is represented not as a street-hawker, but as a fool and holds a mirror as a new attribute. How has this figure been interpreted by scholars? Jan Grauls (1939) explains it from philological sources such as those mentioned above, and assumes that the picture of Nemo is nothing but a didactic evocation for more self-recognition and a warning

<sup>18</sup> The programme has the name and the address of the printer, "Gheprint Tantwerpen by Hans de Laet inde Cammerstrate inde Rape". See the article, Sheila Williams and Jean Jacqout, "Ommegangs Anverso du Temps de Bruegel et de van Heemskerck", *Centre National de la Recherche scientifique*, Paris, 1960, p. 377-382.

<sup>19</sup> Franzepp Würtenberger, *Pieter Bruegel der Ältere und die deutsche Kunst*, Wiesbaden, 1957, pp. 80-83.

<sup>20</sup> Gerta Calmann, "The Picture of Nobody", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, London, 1960 XXIII, pp. 60-104. cf. Charles Mitchell, *Hogarth's Peregrination*, Oxford, 1952, pp. xxiv-xxxi.

<sup>22</sup> The present writer uses the English translation of "Niemand" from the article of Calmann. G. Calmann, "The Picture of Nobody", *op. cit.*, p. 102.



against self-love and egoism because "tis al niet de ydelheyt der Weerelt" (it is only the vanity of the world.)<sup>23</sup> Tolnay (1952) argues against Grauls and insists that Nemo is the antithesis of Elck (Everyman), however both figures are creatures of a topsy-turvy world. On the other hand, *Nemo* is a happy man, and he is "the covetous fool, who on the rubbish heap of worthless things has finally found peace and leisure to look at himself in a mirror."<sup>24</sup>

C. Stridbeck (1956) remarks first on the fool's costume which suggests that it cannot be considered positively, "denn der Narr ist ein übliches Symbol der Torheit. Das Selbstbespiegeln als negative symbolische Handlung ist u.a. ein Kennzeichen der Allegorie der *Superbia* (die Hochmut) und hat die Aufgabe, die Eigenliebe des hochmütigen Menschen zu veranschaulichen. Diese Sinngebung kann aus der antiken Mythologie hergeleitet werden — der sich selbst bespiegelnde Narcissus war der Renaissance ein Bild der Eigenliebe."<sup>25</sup> A. Klein (1963) writes that the meaning of the inscription in the picture signifies "the ironical commentary — not an answer — to the age-old injunction: Know thyself!"<sup>26</sup>

Calmann takes seriously the development of *Niemand* in the time of the Reformation and its spiritual influence on Bruegel's *Nemo*. Ulrich von Hutten changes Schan's poem into a satire on degenerate priests and the Pope of Rome. As Calmann writes; "Hutten was not interested in admonishing householders; this kind of pedestrian moralizing belonged to the small townspeople despised by the aristocratic scholar. But he was anxious to be widely known and may therefore have harnessed the popular Nobody to his learned purpose."<sup>27</sup>

Later Schan himself, the author of *Niemand*, changed his poem to accuse the Catholic Church in reference to the Mass, veneration of relics, and indulgences. Thus, the representation of *Niemand* was slightly changed. One major change was the removal of the padlock (Fig. 15), and a new title was given to explain this: "Der wohlredendt Niemand" (The wellspoken Nobody), and the poem begins, "God has given evidence of His power through me, and has taken the padlock from my mouth." Thus, Calmann attempts to trace the influence of the concept of Sebastian Franck, first a Lutheran and later an Anabaptist, on Bruegel's *Nemo*. Franck wrote that Everyman is obsessed by self-love, however Nobody is innocent of self-love (one may remember that *Niemand* was falsely accused of being a negligent housekeeper, although he was innocent), moreover he is a wise man acting as a fool for Christ's sake as Erasmus praised *Moria* at the end of "The Praise of Folly" quoting a Greek proverb, "Even a foolish man will often speak a word in reason."

Calmann sees in the mirror of Bruegel's *Nemo* an attribute of *Prudentia* rather than a symbol of vanity, because in Bruegel's time it was illustrated as a symbol of self-knowledge. Thus, Bruegel's *Nemo* is contrasted with melancholic Elck. Calmann writes: "Elck and Nemo form part of man's paradoxical nature and are a picture of a psychological phenomenon. His

<sup>23</sup> Jan Grauls, "Ter verklaring van Bosch en Bruegel, II, Pieter Bruegel en de Antwerpsche Ommegang", *Gentsche Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, VI, 1939, pp. 149.

<sup>24</sup> Charles de Tolnay, *The Drawings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, New York, 1952, p. 29, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Carl G. Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien*, Stockholm, 1956, p. 60

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Klein, *Graphic worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, New York 1963, p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> G. Calmann, "The Picture of Nobody", *op. cit.*, p. 77-78.



materialistic obsession isolates the individual, while the other part of his nature, divine reason, annihilates his isolation in the awareness of God. The reflection in the glass corresponds to the mystical conception of Nothing: 'Not I, but God in me' ".<sup>28</sup>

In this picture there doesn't seem to be any connotation of the reform ideas of Sebastian Franck, as Calmann suggested. *Nemo* is not an antithesis to *Elck* as Tolnay suggests, but he is a reflected image of *Elck*. A mirror is neither an attribute of prudence nor a symbol of spiritual victory as Calmann says. On the contrary, the mirror is rather an attribute of *Superbia*, or Vanity. In Bruegel's *Superbia* (a preparatory drawing for the engraving in 1557), a mirror is depicted three times: The personification of *Superbia* holds a mirror, a demon on whose back a deadly arrow is stuck, looks at his own rectum in a mirror and finally a monster having a tail in the shape of a peacock feather sees his miserable face in a mirror, because his mouth is locked with a padlock due to his evil tongue. Sebastian Brant, a German poet of the 15th and 16th centuries, says in his chapter on self-complacency in *The Ship of Fools*, "Who in the mirror sees his face, will often see a vile grimace."<sup>29</sup> This leads to the following conclusions:

1. Bruegel's *Nemo* is not exactly like the German *Niemand*, although he stands amidst the traditional environment. Yet, he wears a fool's costume and no padlock on his mouth and no other attribute which is always seen in the German *Niemand* up to the time of Pencz.

2. According to Calmann, the character of *Niemand* has undergone changes along with the social trends. The earlier character was taken from the poem of Joerg Schan, but during the Reformation, *Niemand* was changed by Ulrich Hutten into an agitator to satirize the Roman pope. In like manner, our *Nemo* could have been changed by Bruegel. *Elck*, a selfish and greedy person seeking only worldly goods and his own profit is *Nemo* in as much as he does not know himself. Also, *Elckerijc* (Everyman), a famous Flemish morality play, which was published at the end of 15th century in England and at the beginning of the 16th in Antwerp,<sup>30</sup> seems to put forward the same human "Elkish" conception as that of a German poet, Joerg Schan.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> G. Calmann, "The Picture of Nobody", *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translated from German to English by E.H. Zedydel, New York 1962, p. 203.

<sup>30</sup> The English edition of *Everyman*, see *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, Everyman's Library, ed. A.C. Cawley. The Dutch edition, see *Hoort wat men u spelen zal*, Spectrum van de Nederlandse Letterkunde, ed. Van der Hijden.

<sup>31</sup> This author refers to her Japanese iconographical study of the relationship between *Elckerijc* and Bruegel's *Elck* See Mori, 1974 (Appendix article 15).





Fig. 11. Pieter Bruegel, *Elck*, drawing, 1558, London, British Museum.



Fig. 12. Pieter Bruegel, *Elck* (detail)



Fig. 13. Pieter Bruegel, *Elck*, engraving, printed by Joannes Galle.



Fig. 14. *Niemand* by Joerg Schan, ca. 1507, woodcut.



Fig. 15. *Niemand* by Joerg Schan, Strassburg, 1533.



IV *Spes* (Hope), drawing, 1559, Berlin Kupferstichkabinett (Fig. 16)

It is known that the general personification of *Spes* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is a female figure who prays to God with clasped hands and looks toward the heavens,<sup>32</sup> as it appears in the painting by Piero Pollaiuolo (Uffizi). However, a different representation of *Spes* appears in some French manuscripts of the second half of the fifteenth century such as in "The Seven Virtues", miniature about 1470 (Fig. 17).<sup>33</sup> Another example of *Spes* in a French manuscript of ca. 1500 shows almost same attributes except the absence of a birdcage (Fig. 18). There she carries a ship on her head and holds a sickle in her right hand and a bee-hive in her left and stands on a birdcage. Each attribute has its meaning; the ship is a symbol of hope for a safe homecoming, the sickle and the bee-hive represent the peasant's hope for a good harvest of both grain and honey, and the birdcage symbolizes hope for freedom. Bruegel follows the latter iconographical tradition and gives his *Spes* a sickle and a bee-hive. Yet Bergström finds an even closer iconographical influence on Bruegel's *Spes* than the French manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> That is a German woodcut print of *Spes*, made by Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder in 1547 (Fig. 19). It is very likely that Vogtherr followed the new iconography of French manuscripts, and he also illustrated various human hopes in a secular way according to the text which is printed on both sides of his *Spes*. It is written in German and contains 92 rhymed lines, mainly about human fear of death and the hope to be saved from it. It can be suggested that Bruegel was inspired by Vogtherr's print and its text. First, as mentioned above, his *Spes* has the two same attributes, a sickle and a bee-hive. Second, the representation of a prisoner in fetters seen in Vogtherr's is also found here. But Bruegel illustrates more closely the text of Vogtherr's print. For instance, in accordance with the text, "Also ein wyb in kinds banden/Hofft es gang glücklich von handen", Bruegel depicts a pregnant woman praying on the seashore for the safe homecoming of her husband and safe delivery of her baby, a detail that is not found in Vogtherr's print. Thus, Bruegel may have been familiar with French manuscripts, and undoubtedly with Vogtherr's print.

<sup>32</sup> In the Arena Chapel of Giotto, Padova, *Spes* has wings and floats toward the heavens which are symbolized by a crown held by an angel. *Spes* as a praying figure is seen on many tombs, for instance, the tomb of Sixtus IV by Antonio Pollaiuolo, Rome, and that of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza by Sansovino, Rome.

<sup>33</sup> Also found in Parisian manuscript, Bibl. Nationale Ms. franc. 9608.

<sup>34</sup> I. Bergström, "The Iconological Origins of *Spes* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 7. 1956, p. 53-63.





Fig. 16. Pieter Bruegel, *Spes*, drawing, 1559, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett



Fig. 17. *Spes* (from the Seven Virtues, detail), about 1470, *Éthique d'Aristote*, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 927, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>.



Fig. 18. *Spes* (from the three Theological Virtues, detail), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. franç. 9608.



Fig. 19. H. Vogtherr the Elder, *Spes*, woodcut, 1547.



V The Fight between Carnival and Lent, oil on panel, 1559, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (Fig. 20).

For this dated and signed oil painting we shall focus our attention on two groups of people in the foreground, namely the Carnival's group on the left and that of Lent on the right. The former group is represented by a fat, drunken man who sits on a barrel and holds a roasted pig's head on a rod. The latter group represents a lean monk sitting on a chair and holding a long wooden bread shovel on which two pieces of herring are laid. These two contrasting groups are present in Bruegel's prints, "The Poor Kitchen" and "The Rich Kitchen" which were printed by Hieronymus Cock in 1563. For our painting there seems to exist at least two pictorial sources: paintings on the same subject preserved only in copies or variations after a lost painting of Hieronymus Bosch, and an engraving by Frans Hogenberg. "The Fight between Carnival and Lent", a grisaille, in the Hague, Galerie Cramer (Fig. 22) is one of those copies after H. Bosch. Here it appears to be quite similar to Bruegel's Carnival with the same attributes: a speared pig's head and the fish of Lent. Moreover the "Allegorical Scene" (fragment) by H. Bosch (?) in the collections of Yale University Art Gallery (Fig. 23) shows a surprising stylistic similarity to the Carnival of Bruegel. Bosch's obese personification of Gluttony also straddles a barrel.

As for this aspect of the composition, an engraving of Frans Hogenberg, dated 1558 (Fig. 21) displays still a closer relationship to Bruegel's painting. Hogenberg's engraving printed by Hieronymus Cock, the life-time publisher of all Bruegel's prints, was issued just one year before Bruegel's painting. It contains an inscription at the top that reads, "DEN VETTEN VASTELAVONT MET ALLE SYN GASTEN COMPT HIER BESTRIDEN DIE MAGER VASTEN" (Fat Carnival with all his guests come here to fight with lean Lent). Hogenberg divides his personages in two groups, Carnival on the left and Lent on the right. The two personifications and their attributes are repeated in Bruegel's painting. Other similarities exist between the two images, such as the fool near Carnival, the procession of musicians, the peasant dances, the cripples, and the beggars in the center. Both Hogenberg and Bruegel place the fighting groups in the foreground, but Bruegel indiscernibly scatters a number of figures in the rest of his composition, so that some figures such as crippled beggars and playing children are seen both in the Carnival and Lent groups. It is seen that Bruegel, thus, richly depicts the peasant life while Hogenberg intends to illustrate the subject-matter.

The position of the church is also quite different. Bruegel relates the church with Lent mass depicting pious people who either go to church or show their mercy to beggars. On the contrary, Hogenberg, placing the church in the center of his composition, does not depict any person entering the church. Could one read in this the religious attitude of Hogenberg? One sure thing is that because he was Protestant, he fled from Antwerp to England, when the Duke of Alba invaded Brussels with his 17,000 Spanish soldiers in 1567.





Fig. 20. Pieter Bruegel, The Fight between Carnival and Lent, oil on panel, 1559, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 21. Frans Hogenberg, The Fight between Carnival and Lent, engraving, 1558.





Fig. 22. Copy after Hieronymus Bosch, *The Fight between Carnival and Lent*, oil on panel, The Hague, Galerie Cramer.



Fig. 23. Hieronymus Bosch(?), *Allegorical Scene (fragment)*, New Haven, Conn, The Yale University Art Gallery.



VI *Temperantia*, drawing, 1560, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen (Fig. 24)

The composition of *Temperantia* bears a close resemblance to Hans Sebald Beham's Mercury (Fig. 27), one of his Seven Planets series. Beham was born in 1500 in Nuremberg and died in 1550 in Frankfurt.<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Lippmann has traced Beham's Seven Planets back to Florentine engravings of about 1460, attributed to Baccio Baldini (Fig. 25), and there is a reversed copy after Baldini's Mercury in woodcut, made around 1464/1465. The date is estimated because of a new additional element in the copy, i.e. Brunelleschi's dome of Santa Maria del Fiore which was completed in 1464. The influence of Baldini's Mercury is found in a drawing by a Netherlandish artist, the Master of the Housebook (Fig. 26), and finally in the work by Beham. As Beham's composition was the closest to that of Bruegel, Bruegel might have seen it together with Beham's many prints of peasant's lives.

Beham was active mainly in Nuremberg in the workshop of Dürer. Bruegel's close friend, Hans Franckert, also came from Nuremberg and lived in Antwerp as a merchant. Thus, we can assume that Franckert brought some prints from his native land, and that Bruegel could have been familiar with German prints of the first half of the 16th century such as those of Dürer, Beham, Georg Pencz and other *Kleinmeisters*. Hieronymus Cock, a leading publisher of prints in Antwerp who ran a publishing house, "In de Vier Winden", since 1548, employed Bruegel from 1555 to his death (Bruegel moved in 1563 from Antwerp to Brussels, and his commercial contacts with Cock were fewer after that date.) Cock obviously possessed many early German prints, and there were a large number of print sellers in Antwerp who came from Nuremberg. Therefore, Bruegel had enough occasions to see German prints.

It is remarkable to note that the personification of Bruegel's *Temperantia* is surrounded by the Seven Liberal Arts which had been considered traditionally as the activities of Mercury's skillful children. The personification of Bruegel's *Temperantia* displays the following attributes - a clock, a pair of spectacles, a bit, a set of spurs, a windmill and a snake. These attributes of *Temperantia*, except for the snake, may be seen in French manuscripts dating from the middle of the fifteenth century, such as the *Éthique d'Aristote* (Rouen; Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 927, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>) (Fig. 28) and the manuscript of Jacques d'Armagnac (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. fr. 9186, fol. 304<sup>r</sup>) (Fig. 29). Therefore, we can see that although Bruegel gave a new meaning to each attribute, his *Temperantia* may have had at least two different pictorial sources, one from the French manuscripts, and the other from Beham's Mercury.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> For a short biography of Beham see section VII Peasant's World of this paper.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion on the iconographical relationship between *Temperantia* and the Seven Liberal Arts as well as Mercury, see Mori 1971 (Appendix article 4).



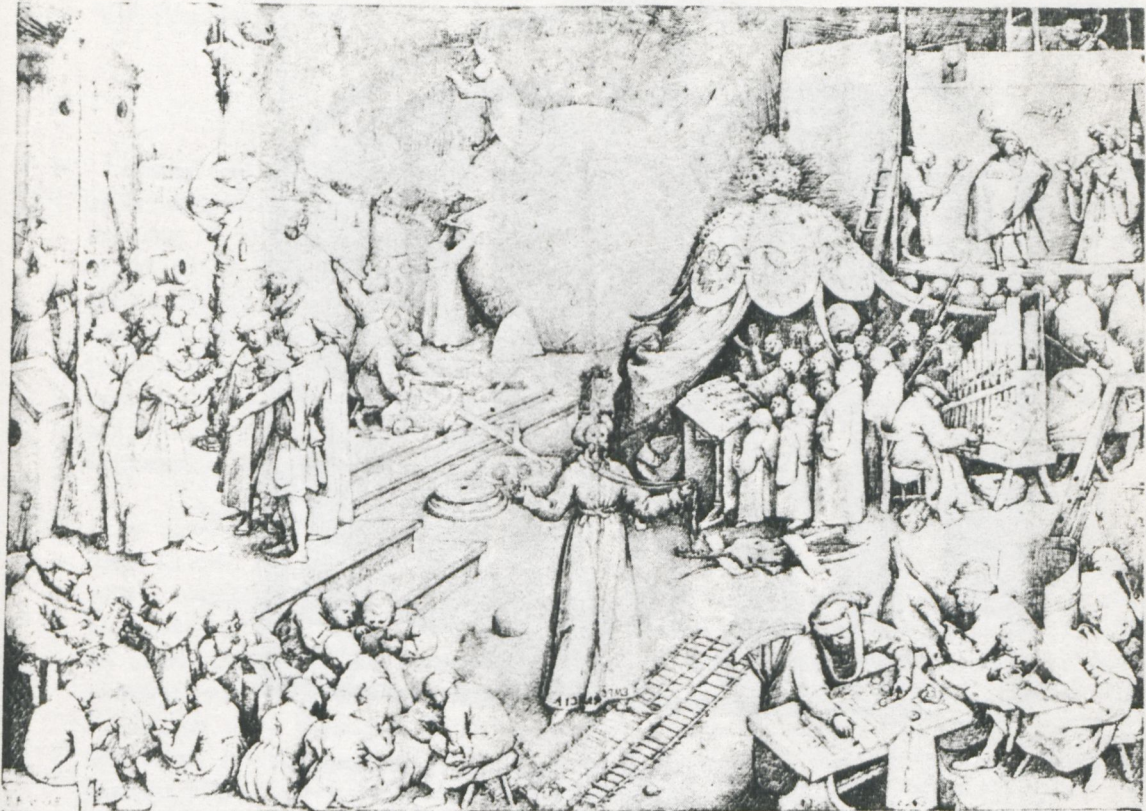


Fig. 24. Pieter Bruegel, *Temperantia*, drawing, 1560, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen.



Fig. 25. Baccio Baldini, *Mercury*, ca. 1460, woodcut.



Fig. 26. Master of the Housebook, drawing, Waldburg-Wolfegg Collection.



Fig. 27. Hans Sebald Beham, *Mercury*, ca. 1530, woodcut.





Fig. 28. The Seven Virtues (the central figure is *Temperantia*), the *Éthique* d'Aristote, Rouen, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. 927, fol. 17v.



Fig. 29. *Temperantia*, manuscript of Jacques d'Armagnac, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. fr. 9186, fol. 304r.



## VII Peasant's World

Bruegel was not the first artist to illustrate the peasants' dance, as the main subject of a painting as is seen in his work "The Wedding Dance in the Open Air" (Fig. 30). Dürer had made some drawings of peasants dancing, but they were depicted as individual groups. Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550), head of Nuremberg's "Kleinmeisters", who worked in Dürer's workshop, was among the first artists to depict genre in the history of German art. He illustrated a cycle of peasants' lives, not only their dances at a feast, but also their quarrels, marriage banquets, etc. Concerning the popularity of these genre pieces Gert van der Osten and Horst Vey write; "Genre motifs occasionally introduced by Dürer, especially motifs from peasant life, were now narrated in breadth and without the condescension of the townsman, though at times very crudely; markets, dancing, kermesses, and lansquenets came to the fore."<sup>37</sup>

In some of Dürer's peasant engravings such as "Egg-merchants", "Three peasants in a conversation", "A peasant and his wife walking", "A dancing couple" (Fig. 31) and "A musician with a bagpipe" (Fig. 32), his peasants are depicted as only individual motifs without broader background settings. Dürer's observation of the peasants provided him with interesting materials for his larger works. He was concerned with their wrinkled clothes, shuffling topboots, and coarse, sunburnt faces. But he refrains from depicting their own world. For instance, his many dancing couples are all by themselves in the composition. From this point of view, Dürer was one of the first artists to value peasants' figures from an artistic point of view and his observations toward peasants reflect the new scientific mind of the Renaissance.

The Peasant's war of 1525/1526 stimulated Nuremberg's free-thinking and impetuous Kleinmeisters. Beham was one of these artists. In response to the Peasant War, he illustrated rebellious, fighting peasants in many of his woodcut prints.<sup>38</sup>

However he was not sympathetic to the Reformation. On the contrary, he published a broadsheet against Luther. As a result, he was condemned by the Nuremberg's Council as one of "Drei gottlosen Maler" (with his younger brother Barthel and Georg Pencz) and banished from the city in 1525. He had another conflict with the city Council over his book on equine proportions. He published it before the appearance of Dürer's work, implying that a part of his book was seemingly plagiarized from his Master's manuscript. Thus Beham's preference for folk life originates from his rebellious temper against the authority of his time. In his graphic world he renders peasant's lives with the eyes of a reporter, namely he observes them in respect to their cultural history rather than Dürer's formalistic view point. Beham's peasants seem relaxed in his picture. Jumping and hopping, they dance together in the village square, accompanied by the music of the bagpipe. Beham made the series "The Peasant's feast or the twelve months" (1527) (Fig. 33) in which he gave each couple imaginary names, such as "Simon Weinmon", "Martinus Wintermon" etc., in order to free them from their traditional anonymity.

<sup>37</sup> Gert von der Osten and Horst Vey, *Painting and Sculpture in Germany and the Netherlands, 1500 to 1600*, London, 1969, p. 233.

<sup>38</sup> See the illustrations of peasants of Beham in the *Bauernkrieg*, Günther Vogler, *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen frühbürgerlichen Revolution*, Berlin, 1974, p. 207, 215, 243.



Beham gave his "Large village fair" (Fig. 34 AB) an unusually oblong format, 36 x 114.2 cm. That is, he put his composition together from 4 blocks to show a panorama of peasant's activities; from left to right one can see a peasant's shop, a conversation on a bench, a dentist and his patient, a marriage ceremony in front of a village church and its procession. In the middle of the composition are represented a feast in front of a ruined house, a kissing couple, a drunkard lying on a bench, and some richly dressed visitors from town. The scene continues with the dance with spears, ball games, quarrels, tournaments, and dancing couples. Behind these activities is seen the open landscape of the village.

Bruegel's "Kermess at Hoboken" (Fig. 35) and "Kermess of St. George's Day" (Fig. 36) are very close to the Beham print in both the atmosphere of the village and the conception of the peasant. However we cannot prove that Bruegel took Beham's village as his model, but it is very likely that he got some inspiration and some stimulation from Beham's prints. Bruegel's people are more vivid and are more lively. Everywhere lovely children games are depicted. Württenberger describes: "Bruegel lehnt sich aber in diesen frühen Bauernszenen noch keineswegs an Deutsches an. Er ist darin noch ganz selbständig. Er vertritt nur dieselbe entwicklungsgeschichtliche Stufe. Denn er läßt diese Jahrmärkte aus seinem eigenen Stil der frühen, vielfigurigen Überschaubilder herauskristallisieren".<sup>39</sup>

Beham's "Nose-dance in Gumpelsbrunn" (Fig. 37) seems to have been the pictorial source for Bruegel's "Feast of Fools" (Fig. 38). Beham's plump peasants with thick, long noses appear also in Bruegel's "Feast of Fools", and Beham's group of peasants dancing in a circle is seen in Bruegel's print. Württenberger describes it as follows; "Vergleichen wir in diesem Zusammenhang damit den Querschnitt von H. B. Beham des Nasentanzes zu Gumpelsbrunn am Sonntag, so steht die Bruegelsche Tragik der Menschen, die den Kompaß für die Gegenstandsbewertung verloren haben, dem vergnügten Possenspiel von Hans Sachs gegenüber, wo am Schabernack der unbeholfenen Bauern man sein ungezwungenes Gaudium haben kann. Auch dieser Bild-Ideenvergleich zeigt, wie sehr die oberdeutsche Flugblattgraphik im Burlesken stecken blieb und nicht zum Allgemein Menschlichen durchgestoßen ist."<sup>40</sup> However we should not overlook the fact that Bruegel may have intended to depict a "Landjuweel" (Regional Competition for rhetoricians' chambers). Some of those Landjuwelen, particularly that of 1551 in Brussels, were very famous. According to L. Lebeer, the people competed by disguising themselves in fool's costumes in order to get a prize. Bruegel however not only shows the amusing feast of peasants, but also human folly in general. As Lebeer suggested; "Bruegel y ayant certainement assisté, il devient évident que, non seulement il y a une corrélation entre elles et l'estampe ici en question, mais aussi que celle-ci offre une occasion de plus pour pénétrer l'esprit profond avec lequel il observait l'homme qui s'abandonne à ses folies inconscientes."<sup>41</sup>

The present writer does not intend to over emphasize Bruegel's borrowing forms from Dürer's peasants or those of Beham in his paintings such as "The Wedding Dance in the Open Air" and "The Peasant Dance". However it seems that the illustrations of peasant's lives in German graphic works certainly appeared to Bruegel fresher, more vivid and animated than the mythological figures which were painted by his contemporaries in the style of Roman mannerism. Karel van Mander tells us that Bruegel was very much interested in the life of peasants: "He did a great deal of work for a

<sup>39</sup> Franzsepp Württenberger, *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. und die deutsche Kunst*, Wiesbaden, 1957, p. 137.

<sup>40</sup> Württenberger, *ibid.*, p. 119-120.

<sup>41</sup> Louis Lebeer, *Catalogue raisonné des estampes de Pierre Brueghel l'ancien*, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 88.



merchant, Hans Franckert, a noble and upright man, who found pleasure in Breughel's company and met him every day. With this Franckert, Breughel often went out into the country to see the peasants at their fairs and weddings. Disguised as peasants they brought gifts like the others, claiming relationship or kinship with the bride or groom. Here Breughel delighted in observing the droll behaviour of the peasants, how they ate, drank, danced, capered or made love, all of which he was well able to reproduce cleverly and pleasantly in water colour or oils, being equally skilled in both processes."<sup>42</sup>

German traditions found followers and imitators in Flanders in the middle of the 16th century, even before Bruegel's activity. Many parallels can be established between Bruegel's peasants and their contemporaries'. But we have too few documents to date these prints so that we are not sure whether Bruegel influenced these artists or vice versa. For instance, "The Bride with her Mother's Honor" of Hans Bol (Fig. 39) is very close to "The Wedding Feast" (Fig. 40) of Bruegel, dated 1568. Hans Bol's other piece, "Dancing Peasants" (Fig. 41) should also be compared to "The Fight Between Carnival and Lent" of Bruegel (Fig. 42).

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<sup>42</sup> Fritz Grossmann, *The Paintings of Bruegel*, London, 1966, p. 7.





Fig. 30. Pieter Bruegel, the Wedding Dance in the Open Air, oil on panel, 1566, Detroit Institute of Arts.



Fig. 31. Albrecht Dürer, a Dancing Couple, engraving, 1519.



Fig. 32. Albrecht Dürer, a Musician with a Bagpipe, engraving, 1514.





Fig. 33. Hans Sebald Beham, the Twelve Months, 1527, woodcut.



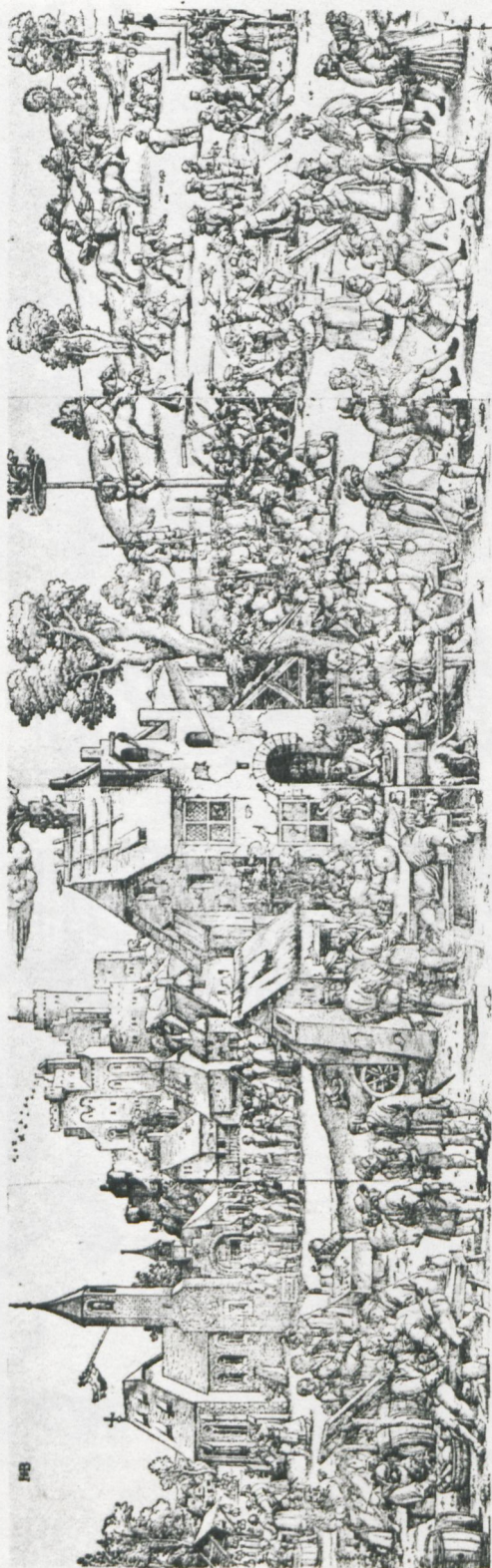


Fig. 34. Hans Sebald Beham, Large Village Fair, 1529, woodcut.





Fig. 35. Pieter Bruegel, Kermess at Hoboken, engraving.



Fig. 36. Pieter Bruegel, Kermess of St. George's Day, engraving.





Fig. 37. Hans Sebald Beham, the Nose-dance in Gumpelsbrunn, woodcut.



Fig. 38. Pieter Bruegel, Feast of Fools, engraving.





Fig. 39. Hans Bol, the Bride with her Maids of Honor, engraving.



Fig. 40. Pieter Bruegel, the Wedding Feast, ca. 1568, oil on panel, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 41. Hans Bol, Dancing Peasants, engraving.



Fig. 42. Pieter Bruegel, The Peasant Dance, ca. 1565-67, oil on panel, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



## VIII The Parable of the Blind, tempera on canvas, 1568, Naples, Museo Nazionale (Fig. 43)

The subject matter of this painting originated in the parable of Christ, "If the blind leads the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14) and "Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39). Sebastian Brant also has adapted this passage of the Gospel in the chapter of "Taking offense at fools" in his *Narrenschiff*: "One blind man calls the other blind, yet both are of the stumbling kind."<sup>43</sup>

Bruegel depicted blind men in various works: three in his *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1558) (Fig. 44), and two in his drawing (1562) (Fig. 46) illustrate the words from the above mentioned Gospels, and there are a few blind beggars in his *Fight between Carnival and Lent* (1559) (Fig. 47).

In the painting under study are seen six blind men, and they are linked either by holding a stick or somebody's shoulder. Yet they do not appear to be beggars at all. They are not only well-dressed, but they also wear various garments one over the other against the cold weather. Their clothes are neither torn nor patched, in contrast to the cripples of Bosch (Fig. 48) or the beggars of Cornelis Massys (Fig. 49 AB). Their shoes are not worn and, above all, the third blind man carries a drinking vessel, a sharp bread-knife and a rosary on his belt. The fourth one has a leather money-bag, while from the neck of the fifth one hangs a white shiny rosary with a crucifix.

This parable had been represented by various artists before Bruegel. An engraving by Pieter van der Heyden after a drawing by Bosch is one of the earliest examples (Fig. 50). It should be noted that it was printed in Cock's shop. There, two blind men are illustrated, and the first is falling into a ditch, while the second, losing his balance, is about to tumble over his mate. Behind this group, appears another tragedy of blind men in the middle ground. Two other engravings were made after Bosch's "Parable". One is the engraving of Cornelis Massys around 1545 (Fig. 51). There, the number of blind men is four, each one gripping another's clothes anxiously. The whole atmosphere of this print is closer to Bruegel than Bosch is to Bruegel. Another example is Hans Bol's three blind men, which was engraved by Pieter van der Heyden in 1561 (Fig. 52). The composition of Hans Bol's seems to have been inspired by that of Bosch. Bushes by a tree in the left foreground, a farmer's house on the same side in the middleground as well as a tree in the right foreground are very alike. Hans Bol increased Bosch's two blind men to three, and it is remarkable that the last one carries an infant on his back. Although it cannot be denied that Bruegel may have

<sup>43</sup> Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translated by Edwin H. Zeydel, New York, 1944, p. 155.



been familiar with these compositions, his own interpretation stresses the near inevitable tragedy. His first blind man already lies helpless on his back in the ditch. The second is about to fall over him. The inevitable fall is increased by the descending diagonal which is also underlined in the expression of the faces of the blind men. Fritz Grossman describes: "Although they are greatly differentiated, each man fully and unforgettably represents as it were the idea of blindness itself."<sup>44</sup> There is also seen a discord between the peaceful and pastoral landscape in the background and the human tragedy in the foreground. That is what Hans Sedlmayr called the "anschauliche Charaktere eines wahrgenommenen Vorgangs, eines 'Gegenständlichen', nicht eines 'Innen', sondern eines 'Außen'".<sup>45</sup>

In this whole composition the position of the church is very striking in comparison with the Parables of the earlier artists. The church stands in a relatively large, open space. From the compositional point of view it is located over the guiding stick between the second and the third man. It has been recently identified as the medieval village church, still standing today at Sint-Anna-Pede near Brussels (Fig. 45).<sup>46</sup> Does the church play an important role in the interpretation of this painting? The answer is very positive. A church in the background is a familiar object with Bruegel because of the time in which he was living, and it seems as if it were necessary for him to profess his belief in the church when the occasion presented itself.

One of the series of Twelve Flemish Proverbs after Bruegel represents also "The Parable of the Blind" (Fig. 53), which is very close to the artist's painting in Naples. René Van Bastelaer ascribed the engraving to Pieter van der Heyden, while seven of the Proverbs among twelve have the monogram of Jan Wierix. It is quite likely that Heyden made his variation from Bruegel's painting. The falling man reminds one of the second blind man of Bruegel's painting, while the tottering one resembles the third. This engraving carries a Flemish text along its circular form, and it seems to serve as a clue to the interpretation of the painting. It reads:

Wandelt altijt in alle voorsichticheijt,  
Sijt ghetrou, betrouet niemant, dan Godt in allen  
Want om dat deen blinde dander leijt  
Sietmense beij tsamen inde gracht vallen.  
(Walk always with all care,  
Be faithful and trust nobody except God in everything  
For, if a blind man leads another blind man,  
One sees that both fall into a ditch.)

<sup>44</sup> Fritz Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel*, London, 1966, p. 203.

<sup>45</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, *Epochen und Werke*, vol. I, Wien, München, 1959, p. 322 and 323.

<sup>46</sup> About the identification of the church with that of Sint-Anna-Pede, standing on the route to Brussels-Ninove see the articles, René Van Bastelaer, "Le paysage de la Parole des Aveugles de Pierre Bruegel", *Mélanges Hulin de Loo*, Brussels and Paris, 1931, p. 321-325. "Het kerkje van St.-Anna-Pede op Bruegels. 'Parabel van de Blinden'", Bert Decorte, *Brabant*, 1969, No. 3, p. 40-41.



G. Glück<sup>47</sup> and F. Grossmann<sup>48</sup> interpret the blind men in this painting as inner blindness, namely those who are blind to true religion. Alfred Neumeyer, basing his opinion on their interpretation sees in the painting Bruegel's warning against his contemporaries whose minds were easily swayed by false prophets and religious fanatics.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, Genaille<sup>50</sup> and Stechow reject their interpretation and think the artist illustrates blind folly of human beings in general. Stechow says: "the leading men are not evil, but unhappy people, just as are the others (and Christ might have agreed). But it is only in Bruegel's interpretation that all men's forsakenness (*der Menschheit ganzer Jammer*) is seen in the image of the blind who have no leader at all."<sup>51</sup>

However, none of these authors provide proof of their interpretations. The present writer finds a poem of Bruegel's contemporary poet, Anna Bijns (1493–1573) titled "O Here, wilt alle blinde verlichten nu met dit nieuwe jaar" (Oh! Lord, kindly cast light on all the blind now with this New Year) to provide such proof.<sup>52</sup> She wrote many anti-Reformation poems, in which she radically satirized the Lutheran sect, especially in her "refrain-bundle" (refrain booklet) of the early period. Her poem of the blind is not dated, but doubtless it was made before 1568, the date of Bruegel's painting, for her "refrain-bundles" were published four times in her life, in 1528, in 1529 (a Latin version), in 1548 and 1567. It is important to note that her last poems were published by the Franciscan brother, P. Pippinck, in Antwerp. The poem entitled "O Here, wilt alle blinde verlichten nu met dit nieuwe jaar" reads as follows:

Den vromen kristenen, die nu ter tijd leven,  
Een't in haarder herten wel een kruis groot.  
... zij d'allende zien  
Der heiliger Kerken. Wien zal men den wijt geven?  
In alle staten ziet men abus bloot,  
't Land is vol blinde lien.

O Here, wilt alle blinde verlichten nu  
Met dit nieuwe jaar.

(To pious Christians who live in the present,  
... is a big cross in their hearts.  
As they see the miserable state  
Of the holy church.  
To whom should one give the blame?  
Everywhere One sees the naked abuses,  
The country is full of blind people.

<sup>47</sup> Gustav Glück, *Das Grosse Bruegel-Werk*, Wien, 1955, p. 90.

<sup>48</sup> F. Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel*, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> Alfred Neumeyer, "Pieter Brueghel, Die Parable von den Blinden, 1568", aus *Glanz des Schönen. Gespräche mit Bildern von Alfred Neumeyer*, Heidelberg, 1959, p. 62 and 63.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Genaille, *Bruegel l'Ancien*, Paris, 1953, p. 53.

<sup>51</sup> Wolfgang Stechow, *Bruegel*, New York, 1969, p. 140.

<sup>52</sup> Anna Bijns, *Meer zuurs dan zoets*, ed. Loder Roose, Hasselt, 1968, pp. 50–53.



Oh! Lord, kindly cast the light on all the blind now  
With this New Year.)

Another part of this poem alludes more closely to a possible meaning of Bruegel's painting, because it speaks of the heretics who deafened the minds of simple folk.

Waar was meerder verblindheid gehoord ooit?  
Zo veel hoofden, zo veel geloven schiere;  
't Herte met geweene zucht.  
Hoewel men overloedelijk Gods woord strooit,  
't Volk laat hem van ketters zo verdoven schiere,  
't Doet luttel oft geen vrucht.  
't Is al geïnficeert deur d'onreene lucht  
Der heresijen, dat de kwaadste pest is.  
O kristenmensen, hiervoor groot en kleene ducht  
Want heel ontsteken in dooste in dweste is.  
Valse profeten — de wereld op 't leste is —  
Nieuw fenijn van dagen tot dagen spouwen;  
Elk dunkt dat zijn opinie de beste is.  
't Is nu tijd dat goet kristenen wagen souwen  
Lijf ende goed, vrienden en magen schouwen,  
In 't gebed haar herten tot God oprichten nu  
En zeggen eenpaar:  
O Here, wilt alle blinde verlichten nu  
Met dit nieuwe jaar.

(Where was it ever heard about blindness more often than now?  
There are almost as many beliefs as there are people;  
The heart sighs with weeping.  
Although one spreads God's words abundantly,  
The common people are almost so intoxicated by heretics,  
That it is nearly useless to practice God's will.  
Everything is infected by the impure air  
Of heretics, which is the worst pest.  
Oh, Christians, great and small, have fear of such,  
For, everything in the East and the West is aflame,  
False prophets — the world is at its end —  
Spit new poisons from day to day;  
Everyman thinks that his opinion is the best.  
It is now the time that good Christians dare  
Risk body and goods, and shun friends and relatives,  
And in prayer lift their hearts to God  
And say with one voice:  
Oh, Lord! Kindly cast the light on all the blind now  
With this New Year.)

The parable of the blind in the Gospel is to be seen in Bijns' following lines. It reads:



Zij zijn blind en in 't donker zij wandelen vrij;  
Die wanen zien en zonder zorgen dolen,  
Vallen in den gracht zaan.  
Dat zij niet en verstaan, daaraf handelen zij;  
't duister houden zij haar verborgen scholen,  
Daar zij in den nacht gaan.<sup>53</sup>  
Op der Kerken geboden zij geen acht slaan,

...  
O Here, wilt alle blinde verlichten nu  
Met dit nieuwe jaar.

(They are blind and wander boldly in the darkness;  
Those who imagine they can see and wander heedlessly,  
Fall of a sudden into the ditch.  
They act although they don't understand;  
In the night they hold their secret assemblies,  
Because they wander in the darkness.  
To church's commandments they pay no attention,

...  
Oh, Lord! Kindly cast the light on all the blind now  
With this New Year.)

We should not conclude that Bruegel read this poem and illustrated it literally in his painting, yet Bijns' criticism of the heretics and depraved ignorant folk of Bruegel's time seemed to be very current among pious Christians,

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<sup>53</sup> St. John, Chapter 8:12.





Fig. 43. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Parable of the Blind*, tempera on canvas, 1568, Naples, Museo Nazionale.



Fig. 44. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Parable of the Blind* (from "Netherlandisch Proverbs," detail), oil on panel, 1558, Berlin-Dahlem, Staatliche Museen.



Fig. 45. The Church of St.-Anna-Pede, Itterbeek, near Brussels. (the photography from *Brabant*.)





Fig. 46. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Blind Men*, drawing, 1562. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett.



Fig. 47. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Fight between Carnival and Lent*, (detail), oil on panel, 1559, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.





Fig. 48. Hieronymus Bosch, Cripples, drawing, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I



Fig. 49AB, Cornelis Massys, The Lamed Beggars, engraving, 1538.





Fig. 50. After Hieronymus Bosch, The Parable of the Blind, engraved by Pieter van der Heyden.



Fig. 51. Cornelis Massys, The Parable of the Blind, engraving, ca. 1545.



Fig. 52. Hans Bol, The Parable of the Blind, engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, 1561.



Fig. 53. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Parable of the Blind, engraving.



## APPENDIX

Works by the same author on Pieter Bruegel (in Japanese)

1. "The Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder", *Mizue*, special issue on Pieter Bruegel, 1968, No. 53, pp. 49-72.
2. *Pieter Bruegel*, Fabbri Master of Art, Heibonsha.
3. "The View of Pieter Bruegel, Discussion about the Fête de la Rosière", *Bijutsu Techo*, 1972, Feb., pp. 138-152.
4. "The Iconography of Pieter Bruegel's *Temperantia*", *Bijutsushi* (Journal of the Japan Art History Society) 1971, Sept., 82, vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 65-85; Dec., 83, vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 105-116. (A M.A. thesis at Bryn Mawr College, 1970).
5. "The so-called *Naer het leven*, drawings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder or those of Roelandt Savery?", *Geijutsu Shincho*, 1972, April pp. 125-134.
6. "The Graphic World of Pieter Bruegel the Elder", *Sansai*, 1972, March, pp. 24-49.
7. "Three Recent Monographies on Pieter Bruegel the Elder", *Bigaku* (Aesthetics) 1972, Fall, pp. 59-70.
8. *Bruegel*, Art Library, Tsuru Shobo, 1972.
9. "The Problems of Interpretation of the Art of Pieter Bruegel", *Sansai*, 1973, June, pp. 85-94.
10. "Documents on the Life of Pieter Bruegel", *Sansai*, 1973, August, pp. 92-100.
11. "Pieter Bruegel and His Journey to Italy", *Sansai*, 1973, Oct., pp. 98-107.
12. "Pieter Bruegel and his Landscape, his Relationship with the Venetian Art", *Sansai*, 1973, December, pp. 98-107.
13. "The Iconographical Relationship between Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, especially in the chapter of the Parson's Tale and the *Superbia* of Pieter Bruegel", *Sansai*, 1975, Feb., pp. 60-69.
14. "The *Elck* of Pieter Bruegel (1), his Conception of the human Being of the 16th century", *Sansai*, 1974, April, pp. 72-81.
15. "The *Elck* of Pieter Bruegel (2), the Netherland Proverbs and *Ommegang* of Antwerp, 1563", *Sansai*, 1974, July, pp. 60-69.
16. "The Problem of the Interpretation of the Art of Pieter Bruegel against Mr. Teiichi Hijikata", *Sansai*, 1974, Aug., pp. 80-90.
17. "Bosch and Bruegel (1), Some Stylistic Researches" *Sansai*, 1974, Oct., pp. 64-75.
18. "Bosch and Bruegel (2), about the Adoration of the Kings", *Sansai*, 1974, Dec., pp. 66-77.
19. "The Netherlandish Proverbs of Pieter Bruegel (1)", *Sansai*, 1975, Feb., pp. 57-67.
20. "The Netherlandish Proverbs of Pieter Bruegel (2)", *Sansai*, 1975, April, pp. 89-97.
21. "Critical Analysis by an Art Historian and a Linguist of the Japanese Translation of L. Lebeer's *Catalogue raisonné des estampes de Pierre Bruegel l'ancien*", *Hon-yaku* (Culture and Translation), 1975, No. 7, pp. 67-75.
22. "The Mass Production of Pieter Bruegel the Younger, an Interpretation of his Crooked Lawyer", *Geijutsu Shincho*, 1975, pp. 140-147.
23. "The Netherlandish Proverbs of Pieter Bruegel (3)", *Sansai*, 1975, pp. 54-62.
24. "De Blauwe Huyck, Publication of Netherland Proverbs and Prints of Proverbs", *Sansai*, 1975, Oct., pp. 51-63.
25. "Bruegel's Months: Some Comparisons with Flemish Manuscripts of the 15th and 16th centuries", *Sansai*, 1976, Feb., pp. 67-75.
26. "The Iconographical Sources of Bruegel's Months", *Sansai*, 1976, April, pp. 77-85.