The following essay was first published in Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen / Antwerp Royal Museum Annual*, 2001, pp. 6-55. Due to unfortunate circumstances, it was translated from Dutch into English (by Irene Schaudies) and published before I was given the opportunity to revise the final (English) draft. Sadly enough, the translation suffered from a number of flaws (the fact that the Middle Dutch quotes were not translated being one of them) and from numerous linguistic or typographic errors. In the text below, these flaws have been remedied and the errors have been corrected. Furthermore, a number of illustrations have been added, and a small number of passages have been adapted. In an appendix, I offer an overview of what has been written about Bosch's cat and mouse/rat since 2001.*

I would like to thank Prof. dr. Jozef D. Janssens, Prof. dr. Maurits Smeyers (+), dr. Roger-Henri Marijnissen (+), Prof. dr. Paul Vandenbroeck, and Joe Oostvogels for their critical comments on earlier versions of this essay.

Fig. 1
Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Delights*, ca. 1500, triptych, oil on panel, 220 x 390 cm (detail: left interior panel), Madrid, Museo del Prado

C o n t e n t s

Mar die heymelike verborghentheit deser ghefigurierder sprake
mach die vlitighe leser lichtelike merken indien dat hi hem pijnt
daertoe te doen naernstighe sorchvoudicheit.

But the diligent reader can easily find the hidden secret of this allegorical language,
if he makes the effort of looking for it with thorough meticulousness.

[Heinric Suso, *Dat Orloy der Ewigher Wysheit*, 14th century]

The Cat and the Mouse (or Rat) in the Left Interior Panel of Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Delights* Triptych: an Iconological Approach

Eric De Bruyn

1 The context: the Marriage of Adam and Eve

1.1 The iconographical meaning of the Adam-Christ-Eve group

Although the iconography of Hieronymus Bosch's so-called *Garden of Delights* triptych (Madrid, Prado) has given rise to an almost endless series of divergent and mutually contradictory interpretations in the past, virtually all Bosch experts agree that the left interior panel of this triptych depicts *Paradise on Earth in its condition before the Fall*. There is also a rare unanimity in Bosch literature regarding the identity of the three large figures in the foreground: from left to right, we see Adam, Christ and Eve. However, if one asks about the meaning of this group and of a number of other motifs in its proximity, it is no longer posssible to speak of uniform interpretations.[1]

The manner in which Bosch has represented a phase in the story of Paradise here is unique within traditional medieval *Adam and Eve* iconography. Apparently, Eve has only just been created: she does not stand with both feet on the ground yet, but seems to hover over the earth, scarcely resting on the tip of her toes, under the impulse of the divine pressure or Christ's hand, the Creating Word. The just-awakened Adam sits halfway up and looks with wide eyes, full of expectation, at the beauty of his future bride. Christ's serious gaze, directed at the viewer, apparently seeks to make clear that something important is happening. In recent Bosch literature, there is more or less a consensus that Bosch has not represented the *Creation of Eve*, but rather the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*.[2] According to Bax, Bosch wished to illustrate the text of Genesis 1, 28: 'Then God blessed them, and God said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds in the air, and

[1] For an overview of interpretations of the *Garden of Delights* triptych (up to 1987), see Mia CINOTTI, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Jérôme Bosch*, Les Classiques de l'Art, Paris, 1967, pp. 99-101 (on the left interior panel specifically: p. 100) and R.H. MARIJNISSEN (in collaboration with Peter RUYFFELAERE), *Hiëronymus Bosch – Het volledig oeuvre*, Antwerp, 1987, pp. 84-102 (on the left interior panel specifically: pp. 88-89). For the period after 1987, two articles are of particular interest: Paul VANDENBROECK, "Jheronimus Bosch' zogenaamde 'Tuin der Lusten' I", in: *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1989, pp. 9-210, and IDEM, "Jheronimus Bosch' zogenaamde 'Tuin der Lusten' II – De Graal of het Valse Liefdesparadijs", in: *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1990, pp. 9-192. Compare also Joaquin YARZA LUACES, *El Jardín de las Delícias de El Bosco*, Madrid, 1998.

[2] See, among others, Walter S. GIBSON, "The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch – The Iconography of the Central Panel", in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXIV, 1973, p. 16; Rosemarie SCHUDER, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Wiesbaden, 1975, pp. 100-101; Carl VAN DE VELDE, "Het Aards Paradijs in de beeldende kunsten", in: [cat. exh.] *Het Aards Paradijs – Dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw*, Antwerp, 1982, p. 23; Dirk BAX, *Hieronymus Bosch and Lucas Cranach – Two Last Judgement triptychs – Description and exposition*, Amsterdam-Oxford-New York, 1983, p. 53; James SNYDER, *Northern Renaissance Art – Painting, sculpture, the graphic arts from 1350 to 1575*, New York, 1985, p. 213; P.M. LE BLANC (ed.), *Jheronimus Bosch – Opstellen over leven en werk door drs. P. Gerlach O.F.M. Cap.*, 's-Gravenhage, 1988, p. 191; VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 36-38, and MARIJNISSEN 1987 (as cited in note 1), p. 91. Marijnissen himself does not address this issue.

over every living thing that moves on the earth"'.[3] In 1985, Tuttle correctly pointed out that what Bosch painted deviates from traditional *Marriage of Adam and Eve* iconography in two ways: Adam and Eve are not standing erect next to the Creator, and the bringing together of the right hands (the so-called *dextrarum iunctio*) is not depicted.[4]

Figure 2
Workshop of Jan de Kempeneer, *The History of Adam and Eve – Eden*, ca. 1550, tapestry, 4,63 x 8,54 m (detail: *The Presentation of Eve to Adam*), Krakow, Wawel Castle (inv. nr. 1).

Perhaps Bosch wanted to depict another motif from pictorial tradition, namely the *Presentation of Eve to Adam*.[5] The Biblical text illustrated by this motif is Genesis 2, 22-24. However, in the Middle Ages the *Presentation* is always depicted in the same manner: God is standing behind Eve and pushes her gently in the back towards Adam.[6] We see this motif

[3] Dirk BAX, *Beschrijving en poging tot verklaring van het Tuin der Onkuisheiddrieluik van Jeroen Bosch, gevolgd door Kritiek op Fraenger*, Amsterdam, 1956, p. 20.
[4] See Virginia TUTTLE, "Lilith in Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights", in: *Simiolus*, XV, 1985, pp. 119-122. I cannot agree with the conclusion that Tuttle draws from this for her further argument (the woman to the right of Adam and Christ is not Eve, but Lilith, according to Jewish legend the first wife of Adam). For the medieval *Marriage of Adam and Eve* iconography, see Adelheid HEIMANN, "Die Hochzeit von Adam und Eva im Paradies, nebst einigen andern Hochzeitsbilder", in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, XXXVII, 1975, pp. 11-40 (in particular p. 14).
[5] Charles DE TOLNAY, *Hieronymus Bosch*, New York, 1966, pp. 360-361. VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), likewise refers to this possibility, without stating explicitly that what we see in the left interior panel is indeed the *Presentation of Eve to Adam*.
[6] See HEIMANN 1975 (as cited in note 4), who uses the German word *Zuführung* for this motif and emphasizes in a footnote (p. 35, note 3) that in *Adam and Eve* iconography, the *Zuführung* and *Hochzeit* motifs should be clearly distinguished from one another.

represented in total agreement with the iconographical tradition in one of the sixteenth-century Brussels tapestries from the Wawel Castle in Krakow (see figure 2).[7] It is obvious that what Bosch painted deviates from this pictorial motif as well: in the *Garden* Christ does not push Eve towards Adam, but holds her firmly by the right wrist. The question then remains: which moment from the *Adam and Eve* cycle did Bosch represent? Given that, chronologically, this moment must lie somewhere between the *Creation of Eve* and the *Fall* and given that Bosch's scene corresponds completely with neither the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* nor the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*, there seems to be only one possible solution to the problem. Just as Bosch did so often, he dealt with conventional iconography in an original manner and combined various elements of pictorial tradition according to his own insight. For the detail under discussion here, this means that Bosch painted a combination of three traditional *Adam and Eve* motifs. The half-erect Adam, looking at Eve, is an element of the *Presentation* motif. Christ situated between Adam and Eve and holding fast to Eve's wrist is a typical part of the *Marriage* motif.[8] And the gesture of blessing that Christ makes is a detail derived from the *Creation of Eve* motif.[9]

What Bosch intended by combining these three iconographical motifs may be clarified by a number of Middle Dutch texts which refer to the Paradise narrative. From these, we learn that in medieval exegesis the *Creation of Eve* as well as the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* and the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* were connected with the idea of the institution of marriage by God in the Garden of Eden. Even more enlightening regarding the scene discussed here is that these texts, just as with Bosch, intertwine the three motifs without any problem and continually refer to Genesis 1, 28 and/or Genesis 2, 22-24, although these Biblical passages do not explicitly mention the marriage theme.

In the thirteenth book of Jacob van Maerlant's *Rijmbijbel* [The Rhymed Bible] (completed in 1272), with the title *Hoe God Yeven maecte* (How God created Eve), the *Creation of Eve* and her *Presentation to Adam* are described in one breath, related to Genesis 2, 23-24, and interpreted as the institution of marriage.

> In desen slaep ende teser stede
> Nam hem God ene rebbe ende vleesch mede
> Ende maecter af een wijf alleene
> Vleesch van vleessche been van beene
> Ende hi leidse daer voor Adame
> Omdat hi haer zoude gheven name.
> Hi sprac: 'Dit vleesch ende dit been
> Es van den minen ende al een:
> Virago salmense nomen.'
> (…)
> Doe Adam twijf hadde ghenant
> Propheterde hi doe te hant:
> 'Omme dat soe es van minen live

[7] Jerzy SZABLOWSKI et al., *De Vlaamse wandtapijten van de Wawelburcht in Krakau – Kunstschat van koning Sigismund II Augustus Jagello*, Antwerp, 1972, pp. 76 / 457.

[8] VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 27-28, also seems to suggest that we are dealing here with a mixture of the *Presentation* and *Marriage* motifs. The same holds true for Isidro BANGO TORVISO and Fernando MARÍAS, *Bosch – relaity, symbol and fantasy*, s.l., 1982, p. 163, who refer to 'the introduction of Adam to Eve by the Creator' and at the same time to 'the consecration of the couple'.

[9] In the left interior panel of his *Last Judgement* triptych (Vienna), Bosch himself painted a Christ figure granting His blessing in a *Creation of Eve* scene. In the left interior panel of the *Haywain* triptych (Madrid), God the Father grants his blessing in a similar context.

So sal die man volghen den wive
Vader ende moeder begheven.'
Ende daer na so es bescreven:
In enen vleessche sullen si .ij. wesen.
Huwelic voorseide hi in desen.[10]

[During this sleep and on this spot, God took one of his ribs and also flesh and created a woman, flesh from flesh and bone from bone. And he took her to Adam so that he could give her a name. Adam said: 'This flesh and this bone have been taken from me and are now one: she will be named Virago.' (…) When Adam had given a name to the woman, he also prophesied: 'Because she has been taken from my body, man will follow woman and leave his father and mother.' And after that it is written: they will be two in one flesh. By this, he predicted marriage.]

In Maerlant's *Spiegel Historiael* [The Mirror of History] (circa 1285), the *Creation of Eve* is described briefly, and Genesis 2, 23 is suggested even more briefly, but a reference to the institution of marriage is not lacking either.

Ene rebbe nam hi hem, dats waer,
Ende heefter af een wijf gemaect.
Ende ten eersten dat Adam waect,
Hiet hise Virago bi namen,
Ende vorsprac van beeden tsamen
Vanden huwelike daer ter stede
Vlescelijc ende oec geestelic mede.[11]

[He took one of his ribs, this is true, and made a woman with it. And as soon as Adam had woken up, he named her Virago and there he predicted their marriage, both in the flesh and in the mind.]

When in the fourth book of his *Der Minnen Loep* [The Ways of Love] (1411-1412) Dirc Potter writes an apology in favour of the married state (which he contrasts to the state of the clergy), his most important argument is the institution of marriage by God in Eden. He cites both Genesis 1, 28 and Genesis 2, 23-24 (erroneously placing the second citation in the mouth of God) and seems to have in mind the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* motif.

God wil die werlt hebben vervolt
Want hi sprac in sijn ghedolt
Doe hi twee menschen hadde ghemaect
Ende si voer hem stonden naect:
'Wasset ende wordet menichfuldich.'
Sijn ghebode sijn wy sculdich
Vast te houden, soe doen wy wael.
Hi sprac in sijnre godliker sael:
'Dese menschen sullen sijn
In enen vleyssche twe schijn.
Die man sal laten sinen vader

[10] J. DAVID (ed.), *Rymbybel van Jacob van Maerlant, met voorrede, varianten van hss., aanteekeningen en glossarium*, volume I, Brussels, 1858, pp. 27-28 (chapter XIII, lines 557-565 / 577-584). In the ninth chapter, Maerlant has then already cited Genesis 1, 28 in connection with the *Creation of Adam* and alluded to the connotations of the divine (and thus sinless) institution of marriage. See IBIDEM, p. 18 (chapter IX, lines 363-372).

[11] M. DE VRIES and E. VERWIJS (eds.), *Jacob van Maerlant's Spiegel Historiael*, volume I, Utrecht, 1982 (reprint of the Leiden edition, 1861-1879), p. 19 (Part I, Book I, chapter 8, lines 34-40).

Ende sijn moeder alte gader
Om te volghen sinen wive
Nader lust van horen live.'
Sint God selver sprac die woerde
Wat mach dan sijn hogher oerde
Dan echtscap, die God selve raemde?[12]

[God wants the world to be filled, for when He had made two people and they stood before Him naked, He spoke gracefully: 'Be fruitful and multiply.' We owe obedience to His commands, if we want to do well. He spoke in His heavenly palace: 'These people will be like two in one flesh. Man will leave his father and also his mother in order to follow his wife, according to the lust of their body.' As God Himself spoke these words, what may be of higher state than matrimony, established by God Himself?]

Dirc van Delf likewise combines the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* motif with Genesis 1, 28 in two passages belonging to the *Somerstuc* [Summer Part] of his *Tafel van den Kersten Ghelove* [A Summary of Christian Faith] (1404).[13] However, the most interesting passage related to Bosch can be found in the *Winterstuc* [Winter Part] of the same work. When Dirc van Delf discusses the sixth commandment in the 32nd chapter, he refers to the story of Eden:

God onse heer die stichtede echtscap of huwelic inden paradijs an man ende an wijf ende ghebenediedse ende seide: Wasset ende wart menichvoudich ende vervollet dat aertrijc. Ende daer-om dattet twee sijn in enen vleisch, dat is in enen kynde, so sel een man eer verlaten vader ende moeder dan sijn wijf.[14]

[God our Lord introduced matrimony or marriage to man and wife in Eden and blessed them and said: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.' And because they are two in one flesh, that is in one child, a man will sooner leave his father and mother than his wife.]

This passage is close to Bosch, because it is not really clear whether the subject is the *Creation of Eve*, the *Presentation of Eve to Adam*, or the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*, whereas on the other hand – by means of the two quotes from Genesis – the institution of marriage is related to a moment when God, Adam, and Eve are together. Furthermore, it is explicitly stated that God blessed Adam and Eve (which is only reported in Genesis 1, 28). Apparently, Bosch did not intend to represent one of the three *Eden* motifs in particular either, but he wanted to focus on the fact that the institution of marriage had already taken place in Eden before the Fall with the explicit approval of God. This explicit approval can be derived from the gesture of blessing and from Christ's serious facial expression, which is directed at the viewer.[15]

Thus, what Dirc van Delf wrote may even supply an answer to the question of why Bosch chose to deviate from pictorial tradition. If Christ's gesture of blessing is indeed intended to emphasize that the first marriage met with God's *explicit* approval, Bosch could not let Christ's

[12] P. LEENDERTZ WZ. (ed.), *Der Minnen Loep, door Dirc Potter*, Leiden, 1845-1847, volume II, p. 49 (Book IV, lines 23-29).
[13] L.M.Fr. DANIELS O.P. (ed.), *Meester Dirc van Delf O.P. – Tafel van den Kersten Ghelove – Naar de handschriften uitgegeven, ingeleid en van aanteekeningen voorzien*, Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf – volume VII, Nijmegen-Utrecht, 1939, p. 409 (chapter 31, lines 56-59) and p. 463 (chapter 37, lines 47-51).
[14] L.M.Fr. DANIELS O.P. (ed.), *Meester Dirc van Delf O.P. – Tafel van den Kersten Ghelove – Naar de handschriften uitgegeven, ingeleid en van aanteekeningen voorzien*, Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf – volume V, Nijmegen-Utrecht, 1937, p. 222 (chapter 32, lines 459-464).
[15] Also Gerlach pointed this out. He also observed that Christ is the largest figure in the left interior panel. See LE BLANC (ed.) 1988 (as cited in note 2), p. 191.

hands join the right hands of Adam and Eve (see the traditional *Marriage of Adam and Eve* iconography), because then Christ needed His right hand to make the gesture of blessing. This would also explain why he chose to represent Adam as still reclining but already half-erect: this position was a well-know element from the traditonal *Presentation of Eve to Adam* motif, itself closely related to the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* motif.

That Bosch did not deal loosely with traditional pictorial motifs out of ignorance, is confirmed by the well-considered manner in which he arranged the Adam-Christ-Eve group.[16] Its composition was meticulously designed by Bosch and turns Christ into a literal and figurative hyphen between Adam and Eve. Adam's feet, pressed together, touch Christ's right foot. From there, a fold of Christ's robe leads the eye of the viewer to Christ's left hand, firmly holding Eve's arm. Another fold then leads to the focal point of the whole scene: Christ's raised right hand, which approves of the marriage with a blessing.

To sum up, we can conclude that the iconographical meaning of the Adam-Christ-Eve group in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych is the institution of marriage by God in Eden, and this in spite of the fact that the scene deviates in some respects from the traditional *Marriage of Adam and Eve* iconography.

1.2 The didactic-normative role of the marriage of Adam and Eve in the late Middle Ages

After all of the above, it is important to realize that the marriage of Adam and Eve played a didactic and normative role in late medieval discussions regarding sexuality and procreation. Medieval theologians and moralists distilled a coherent view on the function of sexuality within Christian life from the story of Eden, focusing on the question of whether there had been sexual relations between Adam and Eve in Paradise before the Fall. In the late Middle Ages, the answer was mainly founded on the authority of St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas. The general opinion was that sexual relations between Adam and Eve in Paradise before the Fall had been God's intention, but it had never come so far. Furthermore, sexuality in Eden was related to procreation and lust under control: Adam and Eve were supposed to have had sexual intercourse only in order to produce children, whereby the genitals would have been subjected to the human will, just as the hands and feet still were after the Fall.[17]

Within the context of late medieval urban culture and the bourgeois morality associated with it, the marital bond between Adam and Eve also functioned as a model of virtue. In the ninth chapter of the third book of *Der Leken Spieghel* [The Mirror of Laymen], with the title *Hoe man ende wijf hen houden selen* [How man and wife will behave], the 14th century Antwerp city clerk Jan van Boendale refers to the marriage in Eden:

> God gaf Adame een wijf
> In dat erdsche paradijs,

[16] This has been pointed out more than once in earlier Bosch literature. See, among others, BAX 1956 (as cited in note 3), p. 20, and Wilhelm FRAENGER, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Gütersloh, 1975, pp. 31-32.

[17] For a summary of medieval thoughts on sexuality and marriage, see Petty BANGE, "Het huwelijk in middeleeuwse ogen", in: *Spiegel Historiael*, XX (1985), 1, pp. 16-20; Petty BANGE, "Voorstellingen over seksualiteit in de late middeleeuwen", in: Gert HEKMA and Herman ROODENBURG (eds.), *Soete Minne ende Helsche Boosheit – Seksuele voorstellingen in Nederland 1300-1850*, Nijmegen, 1988, pp. 42-60: Paul VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 30-36; P.G.J.M. RAEDTS, "Het aards paradijs: de tuin als beeld van het geluk", in: R.E.V. STUIP and C. VELLEKOOP (eds.), *Tuinen in de middeleeuwen*, Utrechtse Bijdragen tot de Mediëvistiek – XI, Hilversum, 1992, pp. 44-46.

In dier manieren, in dier wijs,
Datsi twee een vleesch sijn souden,
Ende daeromme den huweleec houden
Datsi kinder souden te gader
Winnen, die den hemelschen vader
Dienen souden ewelijc.
Hieromme was thuwelijc
Puerlic ghemaect alleene,
Ende om ander dinc engheene.
Die te huweleeke trect om dat
Hi sine oncuisheit sal te bat
Doen sonder scande na sijn ghevoech,
Wet datti Gode niene doet gnoech.[18]

[God gave Adam a wife in the earthly paradise in such a manner, in such a way that they would be two in one flesh, and that they would marry in order to produce children together, who would serve the heavenly father eternally. This was the only reason why matrimony was created and there was no other reason. He who marries in order to lustfully satisfy his unchastity without scandal will never receive God's approval.]

Boendale then immediately adds that a man is the *voeght* (tutor) and *meester* (master) of his married wife, *daer hi goet is ende bescheiden* (because he is good and wise).

The same threefold lesson to be drawn from the marriage of Adam and Eve (the focus on procreation, the control of lust, and the dominance of man over his wife) is repeated over and over again in medieval urban literature around 1500. The emphasis sometimes lies on procreation and the control of lust, at other times on the wife's duty to obey her husband, whereas in some cases these three things are mentioned in one single breath. I will give one representative example of each of these three cases.

A South Netherlandish *rederijker* poem written by Jan van den Berghe (died 1559) and entitled *Salich ist houwelyck dat met Godt beghint* (A marriage that begins with God is blessed) focuses on the idea that marriage was instituted by God in Eden and should be aimed at procreation. When children are born, then marriage itself is an *eertsch paradys vol welden* (an earthly paradise full of delights). However, those who *versamen* (come together) in order to quench their heated flesh and nature live as beasts and deliver themselves into the power of the devil. Furthermore, a wife should obey her husband, and the husband should only love his own wife. The poet admonishes the married couple: *Heer bruydegom, vrouw bruyt, siet dat ghy desen / Houwelycken staet onderhout soe Paulus vermelt, / Want hy is een groot Sacrament uuytgelesen, / Van Godt int aertsch paradys in gestelt* (Lord bridegroom, lady bride, see to it that you respect this married state, as St Paul says, for it is a wonderful and important sacrament, instituted by God in earthly paradise).[19]

Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen (The Deceit of Women], a book printed by Jan Bernts in Utrecht circa 1532, gives 23 examples of deceitful women in the past and the present. The first example describes how Adam was deceived by Eve. The author's opinion on the position of married women based on this story can be called mild in comparison with other contemporary

[18] M. DE VRIES (ed.), *Der Leken Spieghel, leerdicht van den jare 1330, door Jan Boendale, gezegd Jan de Clerc, schepenklerk te Antwerpen*, Leiden, 1844-1848, volume III, pp. 116-117 (Book III, chapter 9, lines 8-22 / 27-34).
[19] C. KRUYSKAMP (ed.), *Dichten en spelen van Jan van den Berghe*, The Hague, 1950, pp. 54-56 (the quoted lines on p. 55, lines 41-44).

statements: he points out that whereas a wife should not be commanding her husband, it is even less permissible for the latter to treat his wife like a doormat.[20]

Finally, in the Middle Dutch version of the *Vision of Tondal*, which was published i.a. by Gerard van der Leempt in 's-Hertogenbosch (Bosch's home town) in 1484, we read the following about the punishment of unchastity in hell…[21]

> Luxurie es ooc van manieren also ic hu segghen sal. Lieden die sijn in huwelicke, al hebben si gheselscip deen metten anderen, up dat sijt doen omme vrucht te winnene, dits gheorlooft van Gode, want Cristus sprac selve tote Adame: Gaet toot dinen wive ende hebt ghemeenscip met hare, ende vervult de weerelt. Maer eyst dat men eenighe luxurie meyteneert omme de ghenouchte vanden vleessche, dese lieden sullen ghetorment sijn.[22]
>
> [I will explain to you the character of unchastity. When married persons have intercourse in order to beget children, this is allowed by God, for Christ Himself spoke to Adam: Go to your wife and have intercourse with her and fill the world. But if unchastity is practised because of the pleasure of the flesh, those persons will be tortured.]

It should not go unnoticed that in this text, just as with Bosch, it is Christ and not God the Father who speaks. Furthermore, because of the words *have intercourse with her and fill the world* this text focuses even more on sexuality in the service of procreation than Genesis 1, 28.

1.3 The function of the Marriage of Adam and Eve in the *Garden of Delights* triptych

After the above digression on the connection between the marriage of Adam and Eve and medieval ideas regarding marriage and sexuality, it does not seem far-fetched to interpret Bosch's representation of the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* as an illustration of Genesis 1, 28 and Genesis 2, 22-24 and at the same time as an edifying exhortation toward procreation, the control of lust, and the obedience of a married wife to her husband. In order to properly grasp the impact of this interpretation, it is necessary to have a look at the three interior panels of the *Garden of Delights* triptych (see figure 3). With no other painter do we encounter the structure 'left interior panel = Earthly Paradise with Adam and Eve / central panel / right interior panel = Hell'. Only two other Bosch triptychs show the same overall scheme: *The Haywain* (preserved in two versions: Madrid, Prado / Escorial) and *The Last Judgement* (Vienna, Akademie). In the Madrid and Vienna left interior panels we see: the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, the *Creation of Eve*, the *Fall*, and the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden*. In the Madrid central panel: humanity led astray by devils and under the spell of the earthly vanities (symbolized by hay). In the Vienna central panel: humanity on the Last Day (a minority is saved by angels whereas the majority is punished by devils. In the Madrid and Vienna right interior panels: the punishment of sinners in hell.

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[20] W.L. BRAEKMAN (ed.), *Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen – Naar het unieke, volledige exemplaar van de Utrechtse druk van Jan Bernts, van circa 1532*, Bruges, 1983, B2r-B3v.

[21] The unique copy of this incunabulum was preserved in Louvain (University Library), but was lost in 1914 at the beginning of the First World War. See C.J.A. VAN DEN OORD, *Twee eeuwen Bosch' boekbedrijf 1450-1650 – Een onderzoek naar de betekenis van Bossche boekdrukkers, uitgevers en librariërs voor het regionale socio-culturele leven*, Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van het Zuiden van Nederland – LXII, Tilburg, 1984, p. 28.

[22] A.T.W. BELLEMANS (ed.), *Tondalus' Visioen – Uitgave van het Gentse handschrift*, Klassieke Galerij – XVII, Antwerp, 1945, p. 49. I have adapted the modern editor's punctuation.

Figure 3
Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Delights*, ca. 1500, triptych, oil on panel, 220 x 390 cm (interior panels), Madrid, Museo del Prado.

The functional structure of these two Bosch triptychs is clear. The central panels show sinful humanity. The left interior panels explain the origin of evil and sin (*Fall of the Rebel Angels*, *Fall of Adam and Eve*). And in the right interior panels we see the consequences of sin. Based on analogy, it seems logical to assume that the central panel of the *Garden of Delights* triptych likewise portrays sinful humanity. The right interior panel of this triptych also represents hell, whereas the left interior panel shows Adam and Eve in Eden. However, on closer inspection, this analogy does not seem to be entirely applicable, because in the left interior panel of the *Garden* only the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* is represented. This is the reason why some Bosch authors have argued that the left interior and central panels of the *Garden* should be interpreted in a *positive* way. Fraenger, for example, saw in the central panel a depiction of the cult of the heretical Adamite, sect, whereas Gerlach recognized a representation of humanity in Eden before the Fall.[23]

However, these authors did not take into account that the opened *Garden* triptych does in fact refer to the *Fall of Adam and Eve*, albeit in a rather unusual place and form: in the lower right corner of the central panel, Adam is pointing an accusing finger at Eve, who is identified as such by the apple in her hand.[24] This observation subsequently leads to the conclusion that sinful humanity is indeed represented in the *Garden*'s central panel. Furthermore, as no Bosch author will deny that the central panel is characterized by an omnipresent erotic symbolism, it is clear that in the light of the above this eroticism should be interpreted in a *negative* way. It thus becomes quite plausible that Bosch painted the innumerable nudes to show that humanity is violating the divine commandment: these men and women do not interpret sexuality as a

[23] See FRAENGER 1975 (as cited in note 16), pp. 9-144, and LE BLANC (ed.) 1988 (as cited in note 2), pp. 194-202.
[24] Compare BAX 1956 (as cited in note 3), p. 129; Walter S. GIBSON, *Hieronymus Bosch*, London, 1973, p. 88; BAX 1983 (as cited in note 2), p. 340; VANDENBROECK 1990 (as cited in note 1), pp. 20-23. MARIJNISSEN 1987 (as cited in note 1), p. 94, hesitates before this interpretation without rejecting it entirely.

means of procreation, but as a means of satisfying their lust. Which explains why in the entire central panel not a single child is to be seen.

1.4 The aggressive fauna in the left interior panel of the *Garden of Delights* triptych

The context sketched above is essential in order to reach a correct iconographical reading of the other scenes in the left interior panel of the *Garden* triptych. Here, a problem is raised by some of the scenes which represent animals. It is remarkable that the left interior panel (which represents Eden *before* the Fall of Man) shows a number of aggressive animals and animals in the process of killing each other. In the foreground (in the immediate proximity of the Adam-Christ-Eve group) a three-headed bird is wrapped up in a skirmish with another bird and three animals in a small pond. A cat has caught a mouse (or rat), and various birds are devouring frogs. In the middleground, an owl sits in an opening of the Fountain of Paradise, which causes unrest among a few birds nearby. And in the background, a lion has killed a doe, a boar is attacking a dragon, and a second owl is attacked by a swarm of other birds.

From these aggressive animals, Tolnay and Baldass concluded that this apparently peaceful Garden of Eden is corrupt, and that the seeds of evil have already been sown before the Fall. Because they interpreted the group with Adam, Christ, and Eve as the *Creation of Eve*, it was logical for them to interpret the murderous animals as a symbolic reflection of Eve as the sinful seductress and thus of the approaching Fall.[25] Bax, however, wrote that nothing special was going on: he interpreted the non-aggressive animals in the left interior panel (explicitly including the owl in the Fountain) as positive sexual symbols which illustrate God's command to procreate (*be fruitful and multiply*). The aggressive fauna would then indicate that animals in Eden could be damaging to one another, but that man had nothing to fear from them, because he had been set over them as their ruler (Genesis 1, 28: *have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*).[26]

In his 1956 monograph on the *Garden*, Bax offered no further arguments for his interpretation. Gibson, however, concurring with Bax, certainly did. In 1973, he referred to a passage from the *Summa Theologiae* (Thomas Aquinas), which indeed points out that the animals in Eden were already aggressive toward one another before the Fall:

> Some say that the animals, which are today wild and kill other animals, were then not only tame toward humans but also toward other animals. But this is totally absurd. Because the sin of humanity did not change the nature of the animals in such a way that those who now eat the meat of other animals according to their nature, such as lions and falcons, would have lived from plants back then. And regarding Genesis 1, 30 the glossa of Beda does not say that trees and plants served as food for all animals and birds, but only for a number of them. Back then, there was already a natural conflict between some animals.[27]

To conclude from this passage – as Gibson does – that 'it was generally agreed that the animals were corrupt even before the Fall of Man' seems somewhat premature. The *quidam dicunt* (some say) at the beginning of the Aquinas passage points out that in the Middle Ages there

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[25] Ludwig VON BALDASS, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Vienna, 1943, p. 26; Charles DE TOLNAY, *Hieronymus Bosch*, New York, 1966, pp. 32 / 360-361.

[26] BAX 1956 (as cited in note 3), pp. 22 / 34, and BAX 1983 (as cited in note 2), pp. 339-340.

[27] My translation. For the Latin original, see Petrus CARAMELLO (ed.), *S. Thomae Aquinitatis Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Turin-Rome, 1950, pp. 470-471 (Prima Pars, Quaestio XCVI, Articulus I). Compare GIBSON 1973 (as cited in note 2), p. 16 (not 60). BAX 1983 (as cited in note 2), p. 340, took over this reference to Thomas Aquinas from Gibson.

was another tradition defending the opinion that the animals in Eden were peaceful before the Fall. This other tradition, harking back to the Church Fathers Basil and Augustine, can be found in various Middle Dutch texts dating from before 1500.[28] Below, I will give four examples.

In the seventh chapter of Jacob van Maerlant's *Rijmbijbel* [The Rhymed Bible], entitled *Hoe God die aerde vercierde met beesten ende met anderen dieren upten sesten dach* [How God adorned the earth with beasts and with other animals on the sixth day], we read:

> Nu vraechtmen of die goedertiere
> God maecte de felle diere
> Entie venijnde vor Adams zonden.
> Dese redene ebbic aldus vonden
> Dat alle die diere sonder waen
> Ghemaect waren onderdaen
> Den mensche te sine emmermere
> Addi ghehort na onsen Here
> Maer nader mesdaet alst wel schijnt
> Worden si fel ende gevenijnt
> Ende staende na siere schade.
>
> [Now people ask whether the merciful Lord created wild and venomous animals before Adam's sins. I have found this answer: the truth is that all animals were created in order to serve man forever, if man had obeyed our Lord. But after the crime, as is plain, they became wild and venomous and ready to cause him harm.]

From these lines, it is possible to understand that before the Fall animals were not aggressive toward man but only toward each other. However, the following lines from the eighth chapter do not allow for such ambiguity:

> Vor die mesdaet horic gewagen
> Gaf God den mensche enten dieren
> Vrucht tetene van manieren
> Want die erde brochte niet dan goet.[29]
>
> [I have heard that before the crime God gave fruits of all kinds to man and animals to eat, because the earth produced nothing but good things.]

In the Middle Dutch *Boec van Sidrac* [Sidrac's Book], which was translated from the French by an anonymous Antwerp author circa 1320, King Boctus asks the following question to Sidrac: *Hoe mochten die clene beestelkine ende die clene wormkine ghesprait werden al die werelt dore?* [How were the small animals and the small insects spread all over the world?]. Sidrac answers:

> Sy worden ghesprait over al die werelt metten winde diese droech vanden ene lande in dandere. Ende doen en plagen beesten no vogele deen dander tetene alsoet God woude voir dien dat sy ghesprait waren in al die werelt: doen begonsten ierst deen den anderen tetene. Maer te voren leveden sy vander vrucht van eerterike.[30]

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[28] Compare VAN DE VELDE 1982 (as cited in note 2), pp. 23-24.

[29] For these quotes, see DAVID (ed.) 1858 (as cited in note 10), pp. 15 (chapter VII, lines 289-299) and 17 (chapter VIII, lines 344-347).

[30] J.F.J. VAN TOL (ed.), *Het Boek van Sidrac in de Nederlanden, met tekstuitgave naar ms. Marshall 28 der Bodleyan Library te Oxford*, Amsterdam, 1936, p. 203 (section 365, lines 19-26).

[They were spread all over the world by the wind that carried them from one country into another. And back then, before they were spread all over the world, the animals and birds did not eat each other, according to God's wish. Later, they began to eat each other, but at first they fed on the fruits of the earth.]

A third example is the *Visioen der Maget Petrissa* [Vision of the Virgin Petrissa], a text preserved in a 15th-century manuscript, which describes how a 17-year-old virgin from Cologne is allowed to have a vision by God and is guided through Eden by the devil. This text explicitly points out: *Int paradijs en sijn oec geen wilde ende verslijndende beesten of quade vogelen of venijnde dieren* [in Eden there are no wild or devouring beasts nor evil birds nor venomous animals].[31]

Finally, *De Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudenesse* (a Middle Dutch rhymed version of the influential *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* dating from around 1410) reports the following about the paradisiacal state in which man was supposed to have lived if Adam and Eve had not violated the Lord's command:

Beesten voghelen zoudene ontsien
Ende niet mesdoen maer van hem vlien.
Lucht noch ongheweder mede
Ne daden hem gheene moeyelichede
Ende zine zouden onder hem leden
Nemmermeer hebben ghestreden
Maer elc andren vriendelike
Ghehantiert broeders ghelike.
Want pays moest wesen te dier stede
Want het was de stad van vreden.[32]

[Beasts and birds would have feared man and would not have harmed him but would have fled from him. Air nor storm would have caused him any trouble and they would not have fought each other but would have treated each other in a friendly way like brothers. For that place had to be peaceful, for it was the place of peace.]

These textual examples show that the Thomist point of view (there were already aggressive animals in Eden before the Fall) was not generally accepted in the late medieval Low Countries. The Middle Dutch sources quoted above consider animals before the Fall as being of great beauty and gentleness, a point of view that perfectly agrees with Genesis 1, 29-30: *And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. An to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air,and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherin there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so*. Strictly speaking, the cat catching a mouse (or rat), the lion devouring a doe, and the birds swallowing

[31] C.G.N. DE VOOYS, "Middeleeuwse schilderingen van het Aards Paradijs", in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, XXV (1906), p. 129. It is true that Petrissa visits the Earthly Paradise in its state after the Fall (which according to medieval theology was a part of Purgatory functioning as a waiting room for Heaven: see Jean DELUMEAU, *Une histoire du paradis – Le jardin des délices*, Paris, 1992, pp. 37-57). But if there are no aggressive animals in Eden after the Fall, there certainly would not have been any before the Fall.

[32] L.M.Fr. DANIELS O.P. (ed.), *De Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudenesse – De Middelnederlandse vertaling van het Speculum Humanae Salvationis naar het handschrift uitgegeven, ingeleid en toegelicht*, Studiën en Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf – IX, Tielt, 1949, p. 15 (chapter I, lines 257-266). It is true that in this passage the peaceful behaviour applies to men and not to animals and birds, but the fact that the peaceful character of Eden is stressed, suggests that the animals and birds were peaceful as well.

up frogs in the left interior panel of the *Garden* contradict what the Bible says. However, since we cannot be sure which of the two points of view Bosch adhered, we find ourselves stalemated: the interpretation of these fighting and killing animals can go in a positive or in a negative direction.

Nevertheless, this iconographical problem can be solved in a plausible way. If it could be established that the aggressive animals in Bosch's left interior panel also appear in other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century visual sources representing Eden (and thus in the proximity of Adam and Eve), and if it could be demonstrated that in other visual and textual (less ambiguous) sources all of these animals had pejorative connotations, this would be a strong argument in favour of the hypothesis that these animals also had a negative meaning for Bosch in an Adam and Eve context. Which would then support the hypothesis that in the left interior panel of the *Garden* Bosch wanted to suggest that something was going wrong in Eden even before the Fall.

1.5 The approach of Paul Vandenbroeck

The approach to the aggressive fauna in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden* suggested at the end of the previous section implies that we should try to understand the art of Bosch by returning to its cultural-historical context, i.e. to the literature, visual sources, and culture of Europe and particularly of the Low Countries and Brabant circa 1500. For one (important) detail of the left interior panel, this appreach has been convincingly worked out by Vandenbroeck: the little owl (*athena noctua*) which is perching in the lower part of the Fountain of Paradise. The lower part of this Fountain stands on a small island in a pond and is in fact a round disc with a hole in its middle. In this opening, a small owl is staring with big eyes at the pearls, precious stones, and glass tubes on the soil in front of him. To the fountain's right, an imaginary bird sits on one of the glass tubes, screeching and flapping its wings in the owl's direction. This bird makes such an uproar that it attracts the attention of the peacock-like bird sitting above him and of another imaginary bird sitting on a tube to the fountain's left.

Curiously enough, the owl in the fountain's opening is placed at the absolute centre point of the left interior panel: if a horizontal and a vertical centre line are drawn on the panel, the owl occupies the place where they intersect.[33] This central positioning strongly suggests that the owl is pivotal with regard to a correct understanding of the left interior panel and in fact of the complete triptych. Vandenbroeck has pointed out that the scene with the owl represents a motif which was widespread in the Middle Ages: *an owl attacked and mocked by other birds*. He considers the detail with the owl the key symbol of the left interior panel, relates it allegorically to the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* theme, and interprets it as follows: 'Marriage, as it was instituted by God, was – and is – corrupted by those who misinterpreted God's wish "be fruitful and multiply" as a safe-conduct toward luxuria, toward a licentious and voluptuous life, toward sexuality for its own sake'.[34]

Vandenbroeck assumes that most of the other animals in the left interior panel represent the idea of procreation and fertility (in conformity with the divine command) in a *positive* way, not only because of their large number but also because of their often aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, some of these animals create an exotic atmosphere. Vandenbroeck does not

[33] This was already pointed out by i.a. Jacques COMBE, *Jérôme Bosch*, Paris, 1946, p. 89, and by FRAENGER 1975 (as cited in note 16), pp. 41-42.

[34] My translation from the Dutch. See VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 72-112 (the citation on p. 112). Vandenbroeck's interpretation of the owl perfectly agrees with Marijnissen's overall interpretation of the *Garden* triptych. Compare MARIJNISSEN 1987 (as cited in note 1), p. 97.

believe that all of the animals have a particular meaning. Some of them cannot be identified, so why would these animals have a special meaning in one case, and no meaning in the other? According to Vandenbroeck, earlier interpretations were always arbitrary and incoherent: details which were thought to be understood were selected, the others were left undisturbed. Apart from the owl in the Fountain of Paradise and the owl in the background (both of them to be interpreted in a negative way), only the monsters to the right of the Fountain in and near the pond, and the birds in the background are said to have a *negative* meaning: definitely negative as far as the birds are concerned, probably negative as far as the monsters are concerned (swarms of birds and monsters also appear elsewhere in the art of Bosch, and then invariably in a negative context).[35]

I cannot concur on every aspect of this argument. In my opinion, Vandenbroeck's approach is also partially arbitrary and incoherent. On the one hand, he interprets the aggressive behaviour of the animals in the left interior panel in a positive-erotic sense, whereas on the other hand he himself has convincingly shown that the aggression in the two details with owls that are attacked by other birds hide a negative symbolism. It could be argued – in favour of Vandenbroeck's point of view – that the little owl's central position in the panel is striking and therefore perhaps exceptional. And indeed, some of the animals in the left interior panel cannot be identified. However, the aggressive animals in the background (lion eating a doe, boar and dragon) can definitely be identified, whereas this is also true for most of the animals in the foreground (cat with mouse/rat, frogs and birds – the latter imaginary but still recognizable as birds –, birds and water creatures). Moreover, the animals in the foreground are also positioned in a crucial part of the panel: in the immediate surroundings of the scene with the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* (the iconographical focus of the left interior panel) plus at the very front and thus painted relatively large, easy to recognize, immediately striking, and therefore with a communicative impact on the viewer that can very well be compared to the special position of the little owl in the Fountain.

Why then would the swarms of birds in the background be excluded from the positive symbolism of the other animals and the mouse-catching cat not? The only way to solve this iconographical issue seems to be: to subject the other details representing aggressive animals to a likewise in-depth investigation that uses the same (cultural-historical) method with which Vandenbroeck dissected the two owl scenes.

[35] VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 44-51.

Figure 4
Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Delights*, ca. 1500, triptych, oil on panel, 220 x 390 cm (detail from the left interior panel), Madrid, Museo del Prado.

2 The *cat catching a mouse/rat* motif in the left interior panel of the *Garden of Delights* triptych

2.1 Iconographical description

Before studying the detail with the cat and the mouse (or rat), it is necessary to focus on the first (and perhaps most important) phase of every iconographical analysis: the thorough investigation of the visual source under research. The major question here is not only: *what do we see*, but also: *do we still see what there was once to be seen?* In the case of the *Garden of Delights*, the latter question is not redundant at all. At the beginning of the 20th century, the triptych was in a poor condition. Particularly the central panel, but also the wings, were severely damaged in various places. The painting underwent a restoration, which was completed in 1935.[36] Old photographs clearly show that the detail with the cat and the mouse / rat in the left interior panel was corrupt: the head of the cat and the animal in its mouth could not be seen (see figure 5).[37] However, this does not make an iconographical interpretation impossible. The Escorial preserves a faithful 16th-century copy of the left interior panel of the *Garden*, which is in a good condition.[38] This copy shows the same detail of the cat with the mouse / rat as the Prado *Garden* triptych, so that we may assume that the restorer of the original left interior panel relied on the Escorial copy and that today the original shows to a high degree what Bosch painted circa 1500.[39] This is further confirmed by a tapestry in the Patrimonio Nacional (Madrid) which is a copy of the opened *Garden* triptych.[40] This tapestry follows the original less faithfully than the Escorial copy, but the cat and the mouse (rat) can clearly be recognized.

As soon as we can be certain that what we are seeing represents Bosch's original intention and not that of a 20th-century restorer, we can engage upon an iconographical description. Regarding the cat and mouse (rat) detail, this also has created problems in the literature on

[36] See J.K. STEPPE, "Jheronimus Bosch – Bijdrage tot de historische en de ikonografische studie van zijn werk", in: *Jheronimus Bosch – Bijdragen bij gelegenheid van de herdenkingstentoonstelling te 's-Hertogenbosch 1967*, 's-Hertogenbosch, 1967, p. 7. From 1998 till 2000, the triptych was again thoroughly restored: see Pilar SILVA MAROTO et al. [exhibition catalogue], *El jardín de las delicias de El Bosco – copías, estudio técnico y restauración*, Madrid, 2000.

[37] See, for example, Charles DE TOLNAY, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Basel, 1937, ill. 72, and Marcel BRION, *Bosch*, Paris, 1938, p. 22.

[38] See M.G. GOSSART, *Jérôme Bosch – Le 'faizeur de dyables' de Bois-le-Duc*, Lille, 1907, p. 62 (note 2), and Gerd UNVERFEHRT, *Hieronymus Bosch – Die Rezeption siner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1980, p. 290 (cat. nr. 161a). Old black-and-white photos in GOSSART 1907, ill. 4 (between pp. 136 and 137), Kurt PFISTER, *Hieronymus Bosch – Das Werk*, Potsdam, 1922, ill. 12, and Walter SCHÜRMEYER, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Munich, 1923, ill. 21. I examined this copy during a visit to the Escorial on August 11, 2000.

[39] Before the triptych was transported to the Prado in 1939, it was in the Escorial. See LE BLANC 1988 (as cited in note 2), p. 187. A 1636 inventory of the Palacio Real de Madrid mentions a copy of the *Garden* triptych (the left interior panel now in the Escorial was probably a part of it). The description of the left interior panel reports: *Un gato bermejo con un ratón en la boca* (a crimson cat with a rat in its mouth). See Isabel MATEO GOMEZ, "El Jardín de las Delicias – A proposito de una copia temprana y un tapiz", in: *Archivo Español de Arte*, XL, nr. 157 (January-March 1967), p. 48.

[40] I studied this tapestry on August 11, 2000, during a visit to the Prado, where it was shown on the occasion of an exhibition focusing on the *Garden* triptych. A small colour illustration of this tapestry in the exhibition catalogue: SILVA MAROTO et al. 2000 (as cited in note 36), p. 47 (cat. nr. 5).

Bosch. Some authors have seen a panther instead of a cat.[41] Others have recognized a small tiger.[42] However, most of the authors who describe the scene see a cat.[43]

Figure 5
Old black-and-white photograph of the detail with the cat and the mouse (rat) in the original left interior panel of the *Garden of Delights* triptych (taken from TOLNAY 1937).

It is not surprising that some have interpreted the cat as a panther, tiger, or leopard, because (as Bax pointed out) Bosch has not depicted the animal faithfully, according to nature. What we see is in fact a *cat-like* animal with an unusually long tail and black and white spots over its entire body. This can be explained by the fact that medieval people believed that the Earthly Paradise was situated somewhere in the faraway East.[44] For this reason, Bosch probably wanted to give the Eden in the left interior panel an exotic outlook by painting all sorts of imaginary or at least uncommon constructions, plants, and animals. For this, he may have been inspired by contemporary travel reports describing exotic fauna, such as *Calcoen*, a book which was printed

[41] Hans ROTHE, *Hieronymus Bosch – Garten der Lüste*, Munich, 1955, p. 10; FRAENGER 1975 (as cited in note 16), p. 138; Jacques CHAILLEY, *Jérôme Bosch et ses symboles – Essai de décryptage*, Brussels, 1978, p. 152.
[42] Heinrich GOERTZ, *Hieronymus Bosch in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg, 1977, p. 62; YARZA LUACES 1998 (as cited in note 1), p. 40, considers the animal a sort of lynx or leopard.
[43] Among others, BAX 1956 (as cited in note 3), pp. 22 / 34; Laurinda S. DIXON, *Alchemical Imagery in Bosch's Garden of Delights triptych* (unpublished dissertation, Boston, University Graduate School), 1980, p. 51; TUTTLE 1985 (as cited in note 4), p. 119; VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), p. 45 (note 238).
[44] See DE VOOYS 1906 (as cited in note 31), pp. 84-85; DELUMEAU 1992 (as cited in note 31), pp. 81-97 / 117. Additional bibliography in VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), p. 41 (note 202).

in Antwerp by Jan van Doesborch circa 1504 and which reports about Vasco da Gama's second journey to India in 1502-1503. In this edition we read the following about the regions in the neighbourhood of the big city of *Melatk* (Malacca?): *In die landen sijn catten soe groet als met ons vossen* [in those countries, there are cats as large as our foxes].[45] Passages such as these make it more plausible that we can indeed interpret Bosch's cat-like animal as a cat.

The same can be said about the animal that the cat carries in its mouth. The small beast is black and has a strikingly long tail, but it is not really clear whether Bosch wanted to represent a rat or some sort of exotic mouse. In the literature on Bosch both interpretations pop up, whereas Bax sticks to 'a mouse or rat'.[46] For now, it seems wise to keep both interpretations in mind, all the more so because it will become clear further below that within the allegorical-semantic field 'hunting cat' the mouse and the rat are to a large degree mutually interchangeable. The iconographical description of the detail under discussion here, could then read: *an exotic cat with a long, curved tail and black and white spots all over its body is holding a mouse or a rat (black and with a long tail) in its mouth*.

2.2 The *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in *Earthly Paradise* iconography circa 1500

Bosch was not the only artist to represent the motif of the cat and the mouse (rat) in an *Adam and Eve* context. Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving (1504) portraying *The Fall of Adam and Eve* uses this motif too (see figure 6).[47] This engraving (close in time to the *Garden* triptych) shows the large frontal figures of Adam and Eve, who are standing next to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eve's right hand takes an apple from the mouth of the snake coiled around a branch of the tree, whereas her left hand is already holding another apple. Below, a mouse sits between Adam's feet and next to Eve's right foot lies a cat.

In his monograph on Dürer, Erwin Panofsky argued that the engraving was inspired by the scholastic notion that the four *humores* had been in perfect balance before the *Fall*. Because of the *Fall*, these *humores* were no longer in balance within the human body, making the humans subject to sickness and death. According to Panofsky, four animals in Dürer's engraving symbolize the four temperaments: the moose refers to the melancholic temperament, the rabbit to the sanguine temperament, the ox to the phlegmatic temperament, and the cat to the choleric temperament.[48]

However, this interpretation seems rather arbitrary, because it does not take into account the mouse, the parrot, and the snake, which are also placed in the immediate surroundings of

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[45] Jan DENUCÉ (ed.), *Calcoen – Verhaal van de tweede reis van Vasco da Gama naar Indië, 1502-1503, published in facsimile with introduction and notes*, Antwerp, 1931, p. 24.

[46] BAX 1956 (as cited in note 3), pp. 22 / 34. Mouse: GOERTZ 1977 (as cited in note 42), p. 62. Rat: TUTTLE 1985 (as cited in note 4), p. 119; VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), p. 45; YARZA LUACES 1998 (as cited in note 1), p. 40. DIXON 1980 (as cited in note 43), p. 51, calls the animals 'a rodent'. CHAILLEY 1978 (as cited in note 41), p. 152, sticks to 'prey'.

[47] Albrecht Dürer, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, copper engraving, 1504, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. nr. RP-P-OB-1155. In 1565, Joannes Wiericx produced a copper engraving which is a faithful copy of Dürer's engraving. See *Antwerp Drawings and Prints, 16th-17th centuries* [exh. cat.], Antwerp, 1976, p. 104 (cat. nr. 120), and *Het Aards Paradijs – Dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw* [exh. cat.], Antwerp, 1982, pp. 132-133 (cat. nr. 81).

[48] Erwin PANOFSKY, *Das Leben und die Kunst Albrecht Dürers – Translated into German by Lise Lotte Möller*, Munich, 1977 (English original: 1955), p. 113-114. This interpretation can also be found in Ivan FENYÖ, *Albrecht Dürer*, Budapest, 1956, p. 34; VAN DE VELDE 1982 (as cited in note 2), pp. 24-25; James SNYDER, *Northern Renaissance Art – Painting, sculpture, the graphic arts from 1350 to 1575*, New York, 1985, pp. 317-318.

Adam and Eve.[49] Particularly the interpretation of the cat comes across as not very convincing: the cat is clearly stalking the mouse, and to explain the meaning of these two animals by relating them to each other seems more logical. Apart from his *humores* interpretation, Panofsky also suggests that the tense relationship between Adam and Eve has a parallel in the mouse and the cat, but he does not go into more detail.

Figure 6
Albrecht Dürer, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, copper engraving, 1504, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. nr. RP-P-OB-1155.

There is yet another sixteenth-century pictorial source in which a cat is stalking a mouse in an *Adam and Eve* context. The *Hours of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese*, completed in Rome in 1546, has a miniature by Giulio Clovio that likewise depicts *The Fall of Adam and Eve* (see

[49] Herbert FRIEDMANN, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome – Animal Symbolism in European Religious Art*, Washington D.C., 1980, pp. 162-163, also pointed out the weakness of this *humores* interpretation. However, in doing so, he does not refer to Panofsky, but to the book by Fenyö (see previous note).

figure 7).[50] Between Adam (left) and Eve (right), a cat (lying in front of Adam) is stalking a mouse (sitting in front of Eve).

Figure 7
Giulio Clovio, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, from *The Hours of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese*, 1546, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, M. 69, fol. 27r.

[50] New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, M. 69, fol. 27r. See, for example, John HARTHAN, *Books of Hours and their owners*, London, 1988, p. 163.

Four conclusions can be drawn from these two parallel examples of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif.[51] First of all, this motif was not only used in an *Adam and Eve* context by Bosch, but circa 1500 it also appeared in the art of other artists outside the Netherlands (Germany, Italy), which suggests that the motif must have had a special meaning in this particular context. Two: in both of the parallel examples, a cat is stalking a mouse, whereas with Bosch the cat has already caught the mouse (rat). This deviation seems to be little more than a variant of the motif and does not cause a real problem for iconographical comparison. As pointed out earlier, Bosch often dealt with traditional motifs in an idiosyncratic manner. This is further confirmed by the fact that in the parallel examples, we see a common cat and a common mouse, whereas Bosch has given these animals and exotic character. Three: Dürer and Clovio clearly represented a mouse. This could be an argument to identify the animal caught by the cat in the *Garden* as an exotic mouse, rather than as a rat.

The most important conclusion – and essential for a correct understanding of the cat and the mouse (rat) with Bosch – concerns the fact that the context in which cat and mouse appear in the parallel examples is *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, and not *The Marriage of Adam and Eve*, as is the case in the *Garden*. Through analogy, this suggests that the *cat catching a mouse* motif not only has negative connotations with Dürer and Clovio, but also with Bosch, which confirms the assumption that Bosch wanted to point out that something is going wrong with the marriage of Adam and Eve. The logical next question then is: what was the symbolic meaning of the *cat catching a mouse* motif in late medieval representations of the *Fall of Adam and Eve*, and thus in the left interior panel of the *Garden*. This question can be answered more easily as soon as we realize that this motif was also present in profane iconography and literature circa 1500.[52]

2.3 The *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in profane iconography circa 1500

In 1548, *Der sotten schip oft dat Narren schip* [The ship of fools or The ship of jesters], a Middle Dutch adaptation of *Das Narren Schyff* by Sebastian Brant (editio princeps: Basel, 1494) was published in Antwerp by Marie Anxt, the widow of Jacob van Liesveldt.[53] The woodcuts in this edition are more or less exact copies of the original Basel woodcuts (1494). What interests us here, is the woodcut which illustrates chapter 33: a fool is sitting at a kitchen table (with a knife, a cup, and some edibles) and is looking through the fingers of his left hand. Next to him, a woman is standing, who seems to be holding a stick in her left hand. The other

[51] I have removed two further examples from the original text: a 1599 drawing by Jacques de Gheyn II (because of an observational error), and a painting (ca. 1606) by Hendrik de Clerck and Denis van Alsloot (because here the cat and the mouse are not close enough to Adam and Eve in order to clearly suggest a close link between the two details).

[52] It should be pointed out here that there are a number of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century visual sources in which a cat is placed in the immediate surroundings of Eve. Such is the case, for example, in a design for a glass window by Dirck Crabeth, dating from circa 1550 and representing *The Creation* (Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet). In the lower left corner we see Adam, who is digging the soil, and Eve, who is weaving. At Eve's feet lies a cat. See VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 2), pp. 20 (ill. 3) / 45. Another example is an engraving by Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius (1597), representing *The Fall of Adam and Eve*. A dog sits at Adam's feet, and a cat lies at Eve's feet. See *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 1991-92, p. 359 (ill. 260). More examples of this motif can be given, and most of them represent *The Fall of Adam and Eve*.

[53] Loek GEERAEDTS (ed.), *Sebastian Brant: Der Sotten Schip, Antwerpen 1548*, Middelburg, 1981, pp. 21-32. This 1548 edition was preceded by two other Middle Dutch editions (Paris 1500 and Antwerp 1504). The text of the three editions is more or less the same, but the 1548 edition has some hundred woodcuts which belong to a unique series, the so-called 'Antwerp series'. Because the unique copy of the 1500 edition is incomplete, and because the 1504 edition has some woodcuts which are difficult to reproduce (due to their poor condition), Geeraedts chose the 1548 edition for his facsimile. See the foreword of GEERAEDTS (ed.) 1981. On the woodcuts: IBIDEM, pp. 32-43.

end of the ‘stick’ is between the fool’s raised left hand and mouth. Underneath the table, in the lower left corner of the woodcut, we see three mice which are chased by a cat. The cat has already caught one of the mice.

Figure 8
Woodcut illustrating chapter 33 in Sebastian Brant, *Das Narren Schyff* (Basel, Johann Bergmann von Olpe, 1494).

In the 1494 editio princeps, a similar woodcut (see figure 8) likewise illustrates chapter 33, which is entitled *Von eebruch* [About adultery].[54] Chapter 33 of the 1548 edition rebukes pimps:

[54] Friedrich ZARNCKE (ed.), *Sebastian Brant: Narrenschiff*, Darmstadt, 1973 (reprint of the Leipzig 1854 edition), p. 34. Zarncke describes the woodcut as follows: ‘Ein narr, an einem tische sitzend, sieht durch die finger, während sine frau mit einem sticken auf der nase spielt, unten fängt eine katze mause’.

men who turn a blind eye when their wives earn money by means of prostitution and adultery. Only one detail of the accompanying woodcut's iconography is explained by the text (apart from the fact that the husband is depicted as a fool): that the fool is holding his left hand in front of his eyes means that he sees the unchaste behaviour of his wife 'through his fingers' (the Middle Dutch *iets door de vingeren zien* means 'to silently tolerate something').This can be derived from the two rhyming lines which introduce the chapter, and which are spoken by the fool: *Ick sie door de vingheren ende moet ghedooghen / Al dat mijn wijf wilt die verblindt mijn ooghen* [I see through the fingers and have to tolerate / everything my wife wants, who blinds my eyes]. Neither the 'stick' in the wife's hand nor the cat hunting mice are mentioned in the text. There are two explanations for this: either the Middle Dutch translator did not understand these details, or he considered them clear enough in the given context and did not feel the urge to offer any extra clarification through the text. The context in which the cat and the mice appear is unambiguous, thanks to the moralizing verses at the end of the chapter:

> Om dat in houwelijcke man ende wijf
> Hebben twee sielen ende maer een lijf
> So wie sijn lijf niet en wille besmetten
> Sal op sijns bedde ghenoots reijnicheyt letten
> En sal gheen vreemde eyeren broeden
> Noch skoeckoecks iongen in sinen nest voeden
> Ouerspel sonderlinghe van gheheuden vrouwen
> Doet menich broeder sijn suster trouwen
> Menighen besitten onrechtuaerdich goet
> Elck salt beletten, is hi wel vroet.[55]
>
> [Because in matrimony man and wife have two souls but only one body, he who does not want to contaminate his body will pay attention to his bed partner's purity and will not breed other's eggs nor feed young cuckoos in his nest. Adultery, in particular of married women, causes many a brother to marry his sister. Many possess illicit goods. Everyone who is wise will prevent this.]

These concluding verses set up a good marriage, in which man and wife form a close-knit, pure unit, as an exemplary norm which is opposed to a marriage in which the wife behaves as an adulterous whore with the permission of her husband. This moral is related to the typical concern of late medieval burghers for the problems that unnatural children and inheritance issues could bring with them.[56]

The 33rd chapter of the 1494 editio princeps offers a similar moral, but here the detail of the mouse-catching cat is explicitly explained. Here, the woodcut is accompanied by the caption: *Wer durch die fynger sehen kann / Vnd loszt syn frow eym andern man / Do lacht die katz die müsz süssz an* [He who can see through the fingers and gives his wife to another man, there the cat smiles sweetly at the mice].[57] The text of the actual chapter has the following passage:

> Eyn katz den müsen gern noch gat
> Wann sie eynst angebissen hat,
> Welch hat vil ander man versucht
> Die würt so schamper und verrucht
> Das sie keyn scham noch ere me acht

[55] For this citation and the previous one, see GEERAEDTS (ed.) 1981 (as cited in note 53), k3v / k4r.
[56] See Petra VAN BOHEEMEN et al. (eds.), *Kent, en versint Eer dat je mint – Vrijen en trouwen 1500-1800*, Zwolle-Apeldoorn, 1989, p. 13.
[57] ZARNCKE (ed.) 1973 (as cited in note 54), p. 34.

Irn mutwill sie alleyn betracht.[58]

[A cat gladly looks for more mice, once it has bitten one. A woman who has seduced many other men becomes so bold and foolish that she no longer cares for shame or honour. She is only interested in her mischief.]

These verses leave no room for doubt as to how we should interpret the detail with the cat and the mice: the cat refers to lascivious women who do not hold strictly to marriage norms and who become sexually involved with other men (the mice). That the cat in the woodcut holds one mouse in its mouth clearly refers to the verses *Eyn katz den müsen gern noch gat / Wann sie eynst angebissen hat*, which according to Zarncke was a well-known German proverb.[59] In the given context, this detail means that a woman cannot quit adultery once she has committed it for the first time, just as a cat is no more able to stop catching mice as soon as it has caught her first.

The *cat catching a mouse* motif in *Das Narren Schyff* thus focuses on the lascivious, whorish behaviour of married women and on the all-too-tolerant, hen-pecked behaviour of their husbands. However, the detail with the 'stick' shows that is primarily the wife who is responsible for this condemnable state of affairs. Zarncke pointed out that this 'stick' is in fact a stalk of straw, and that the woman in the woodcut 'dem manne das hälmlein durch den mund (zieht)' [draws the man a stalk of straw through the mouth], which is a well-known German expression meaning that one person deceives another person by means of flattery.[60] It is noteworthy that in the 1548 Middle Dutch adaptation, the prostitution aspect has been added. In the original Middle Low German text, the woman deceives her husband only because she is lascivious. In the Middle Dutch text she does it because she is lascivious and for financial profit. However, in both cases the mouse-catching cat is associated with 'lasciviousness' and 'deceit'.

The second example of the *cat catching a mouse* motif in profane iconography presented here is less fruitful than the first, so I will limit myself to a brief discussion of the relevant information. Around 1517, the Middle Dutch prose novel *Die Historie van Peeter van Provencen* [The History of Peter of Provence] was printed and published in Antwerp by Willem Vorsterman.[61] On page I3r there is a woodcut (see figure 9), of which Vinck gave the following description: 'A young noblewoman is standing in a room. To her left, on the floor, sits an animal, probably a cat, which is holding a mouse in its paws. Also to the left, we see an unrolled parchment scroll'.[62] Vinck limits himself to this description but also points out that the same woodcut appears twice in a later sixteenth-century edition of the text (Antwerp, Claes van den Wouwere, circa 1565).

The woodcut illustrates a passage of the prose novel in which we learn that the Provençal knight Peeter has left his beloved Maghelone alone while she is sleeping in a wood. Maghelone of Naples is a beautiful Italian princess, who has fled her parents' castle together with Peeter.

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[58] IBIDEM, p. 35 (lines 47-52).

[59] IBIDEM, p. 367 (comment on line 47).

[60] IBIDEM, p. 366.

[61] W.L. BRAEKMAN (ed.), *Die historie van Peeter van Provencen – Een Vlaamse prozaroman, naar het unieke exemplaar van de druk (ca. 1517) van Willem Vorsterman*, Zeldzame Volksboeken uit de Nederlanden – V, Sint-Niklaas, 1982. On this printed book, see Luc DEBAENE, *De Nederlandse Volksboeken – Ontstaan en geschiedenis van de Nederlandse prozaromans, gedrukt tussen 1475 en 1540*, Hulst, 1977 (reprint of the Antwerp 1951 edition), pp. 141-146, and Pierre VINCK, "Het volksboek Die Historie van Peeter van Provencen ende die schoone Maghelone van Napels", in: *Jaarboek De Fonteine*, XXVII (1976-1977), I, pp. 3-45.

[62] VINCK 1976-1977 (see previous note), p. 17. I translated from the Dutch.

Peeter has now left her alone in order to pursue a predatory bird that has stolen the three rings which Peeter had given to Maghelone. A new subtitle then follows at the bottom of page I2v: *Hoe maghelone ontwaeckende haer seluen allen vant* [How Maghelone woke up and found herself alone]. At the top of the next page (sig. I3r), we see the woodcut that concerns us here.

Figure 9
Woodcut from *Die historie van Peeter van Provencen* (Antwerp, Willem Vorsterman, ca. 1517), sig. I3r.

We then read how Maghelone is torn apart by despair, anger, and doubt. First she thinks that Peeter has lost his way, then she assumes that he has abandonned her, but when she notices that their two horses are still there, she feels sorry about her ugly thoughts, calling herself *valsche katiue* [nasty miserable woman], and assumes that the devil wants to punish them, because she and her lover have behaved in a chaste manner.[63]

There is not one single reference in the text to a mouse-catching cat. Although some passages in the text vaguely suggest a virtual metaphorical interpretation, I would plead in favour of caution and common sense here.[64] It is a well-known fact that late medieval printed

[63] For a complete summary of the contents, see BRAEKMAN (ed.) 1981 (as cited in note 61), pp. 15-17, and VINCK 1976-1977 (as cited in note 61), pp. 19-22.

[64] Does the mouse-catching cat refer to Maghelone's initial assumption that Peeter has deceived her? Or does the cat refer to the devil, who according to Maghelone wants to deceive and tempt Peeter and herself? Or does the cat refer to Maghelone herself, because she has been thinking bad things about Peeter, in which case the phrase *valsche kative* could be a (far-fetched) pun on the Middle Dutch *valsche kattinne* (nasty she-cat). Although in late medieval editions a 'u' (pronounced as 'v') was not uncommonly misprinted as 'n', in this case a printer's error does not seem very likely, because then a 't' and an 'n' would also have been dropped. Unless the printer spelled the word for she-cat as *katine*, in which case the 'u' could be a misprinted 'n' after all.

books sometimes use woodcuts which were originally intended for another book, resulting in a very loose tie between text and woodcut.[65] The young noblewoman in the Vorsterman woodcut finds herself indoors and not in a wood. Together with the parchment scroll (which does not have any text), this justifies the assumption that the woodcut was originally intended for a completely different book. Vorsterman could then have added the woodcut for the pure and simple reason that a young lady is depicted in it, which in his eyes was sufficient to make the link to Maghelone.

For now, it seems better not to pay too much attention to this profane example of the *mouse-catching cat* motif, which limits our material to one single, but very clear example: the woodcut in *Das Narren Schyff*. The metaphorical meaning of the *mouse-catching cat* in this woodcut is confirmed by a number of profane textual sources dating from circa 1500. There, the motif appears in a similar pejorative context of lust and deceit.

2.4 The *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in profane texts circa 1500

2.4.1 Twil al muysen dat van catten compt

In the second book of his *Der naturen bloeme* [Anthology of Nature] (circa 1270) the Middle Dutch author Jacob van Maerlant writes about *mysio dat es ene cat* [the mouse-catcher (literally: mouser), which is a cat]:

> Onreyne es soe, muse ende ratten
> Dit sijn alle proie der catten.
> Als sise vaen, so spelen sier mede,
> Ende na menighe onsalichede,
> Die si hem hebben ghedaen,
> Eten sise danne saen.[66]
>
> [She is impure. Mice and rats are the cats' preys. When they catch them, they play with them, and after they have done many unpleasant things with them, they quickly eat them.]

The zoological knowledge that cats are keen on mice (and rats) and will catch them whenever they get a chance was a medieval commonplace. The age-old enmity between cat and mouse was so well-known that in the 12th book of his *Etymologiae* (7th century), a very influential text in the Middle Ages, Isidore of Seville derived the etymology of the Latin words *musio* and *cattus* (in part correctly) from the cat's being partial to catching mice: *The cat (musio) owes its name to its enmity toward the mouse (mus). It is commonly called 'cattus' on account of the fact that it 'catches' (captura)*.[67] With this topos from natural history in mind, we can easily understand why the author of the Middle Dutch beast epic *Van den Vos Reynaerde* [About Reynart the Fox] (13th century) has the tomcat Tybeert react with boundless enthusiasm when Reynaert suggests to go and catch mice in the house of the village priest, a plan which eventually does not end well for Tybeert.[68]

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[65] See VINCK 1976-1977 (as cited in note 61), p. 12.
[66] Eelco VERWIJS (ed.), *Jacob van Maerlant's Naturen Bloeme*, s.l., 1980 (reprint of the 1878 edition), I, p. 126 (Book II, lines 2853-2858).
[67] My translation. For the Latin original, see Jacques ANDRÉ (ed.), *Isidore de Séville – Etymologies – Livre XII: Des animaux*, Paris, 1986, pp. 120-121 (chapter 2, paragraph 38).
[68] Jozef JANSSENS et al. (eds.), *Van den Vos Reynaerde – Het Comburgse handschrift*, Louvain, 1991 (2), p. 69 (lines 1131-1141).

The fact that the cat cannot deny its true nature, often (as in Tybeert's case) when it should know better, had become proverbial in the late Middle Ages. The *Proverbia Communia*, a printed collection of 803 Middle Dutch proverbs (oldest edition: 1480), has: *catten kinder die muysen ghaerne* [children of cats like to catch mice]. The parallel Latin translation reads: *cattorum nati sunt mures prendere nati* [what is born of cats is born to catch mice]. This proverb was also known in other medieval languages (such as Latin, French, English, and German).[69] In *Seer Schoone Spreeckwoorden* [Very Nice Proverbs], a French-Dutch collection of proverbs which was printed by Hans de Laet in Antwerp in 1549, we read: *Qui de chatte naist / souriz prend / Die van catten compt / muyst wel* [What is born of cats catches mice. What comes from cats, is good at catching mice].[70] And another collection, *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden* [Common Dutch Proverbs], published by Peter Warnersen in Kampen in 1550, has: *Twil al muysen / dat van catten compt* [All that comes from cats wants to catch mice].[71]

The same proverb is also represented in an engraving dealing with proverbs by Jan van Doetinchem (1577): *Twill all muusen watt van Catten comt* [All that comes from cats wants to catch mice].[72] The title of this engraving is *De Blauwe Huijcke is dith meest ghenaemt, maer des Werrelts Idel Sprocken hem beeter betaemt* [This is commonly called The Blue Hooded Cloak, but The Sayings of the Vain World would be better], which shows that the represented proverbs were associated with negative things.[73] In other words: that the people and situations to which the proverbs refer, are in some way or other condemnable. When in his book on Dutch proverbs, the modern author Stoett explained *het muist wat van katten komt* [what comes from cats catches mice] as 'the young show the nature of the old, inborn characteristics cannot be denied', he correctly added: 'Usually in malam partem'.[74] That 'what comes from cats wants to chase mice' had a negative connotation around 1500, is confirmed by the close link between this proverb and another one: nature is stronger than nurture.

In *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden* (1550), already referred to above, we find the following cluster of proverbs:

> Aert laet van aert niet. Die Katte laet haer muysen niet.
> Die natuere gaet voer die leere.
> Die aert gaet voer alle gewoenheyt.
> Die Aexter can haer huppen niet laten.[75]

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[69] Richard JENTE (ed.), *Proverbia Communia – A fifteenth century collection of Dutch proverbs together with the Low German version*, Indiana University Publications, Folklore Series – IV, Bloomington (Indiana), 1947, pp. 52 (nr. 143) / 146 (nr. 143).

[70] G.G. KLOEKE (ed.), *Uitgave van 'Seer Schoone Spreeckwoorden / oft Prouerbia' (in Franse en Vlaamse taal) in 1549 te Antwerpen verschenen*, Taalkundige Bijdragen van Noord en Zuid – XIII, Assen, 1962, p. 39 (nr. 653).

[71] G.G. KLOEKE (ed.), *Kamper spreekwoorden, naar de uitgave van Warnersen anno 1550*. Taalkundige Bijdragen van Noord en Zuid – VIII, Assen, 1959, p. 50 (line 23).

[72] Louis LEBEER, "De Blauwe Huyck", in: *Gentsche Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, VI (1939-1940), pp. 186 / 202.

[73] See LEBEER 1939-1940 (see previous note), p. 171, and Maurits DE MEYER, "*De Blauwe Huyck* van Jan van Doetinchem, 1577", in: *Volkskunde*, LXXI (1970), 4, p. 334.

[74] My translation. F.A. STOETT, *Nederlandse spreekwoorden en gezegden, verklaard en vergeleken met die in het Frans, Duits en Engels – Bewerkt door Dr. C. Kruyskamp*, Zutphen, 1981, p. 225 (nr. 1084): 'De jongen vertonen de aard van de ouden, aangeboren eigenschappen laten zich niet verloochenen'. Other modern authors often limit themselves to the explanation 'children have the same character as their parents'. See, for example, K. TER LAAN, *Nederlandse spreekwoorden, spreuken en zegswijzen, met de weerspreuken verzameld door A.M. Heidt jr.*, Amsterdam-Brussels, 1984, p. 160, and H.L. COX et al., *Spreekwoordenboek in vier talen – Nederlands / Frans / Duits / Engels*, Utrecht-Antwerp, 1988, p. 22 (nr. 9).

[75] G.G. KLOEKE (ed.) 1959 (as cited in note 71), p. 10 (lines 22-25).

> [Character does not give up character. The cat does not give up its catching mice. Nature is stronger than nurture. Character is stronger than habituation. The magpie cannot give up its hopping.]

The proverbs in this collection are not arranged in alphabetical order, but according to other principles. Sometimes a number of proverbs have one word in common, others are placed together because they deal with the same theme.[76] The latter principle applies to the proverbs cited above: they all mean that it is difficult to get rid of inborn inclinations, and that these inclinations often lead to foolish behaviour. The second part of this meaning is not really explicit in the proverb *natuere gaet voer die leere* [nature is stronger than nurture], but because the proverbs are grouped together and deal with the same subject, it is logical that they complete and clarify each other.[77]

The proverb *natuere gaet bouen leere* [nature is stronger than nurture] can also be found in the *Proverbia Communia* (1480) and was internationally known in the late Middle Ages.[78] The source used for Warnersen's *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden* (1550) was the German proverb collection of Johannes Agricola von Eisleben.[79] In this German collection, the cluster of proverbs cited above is reproduced (more correctly: preproduced) as follows:

> Art lest von art nicht / die Katze lesst yhres mausens nicht.
> Marcolfus beweisete / Art gieng fur alle gewonheyt.
> Die krawe geet yhres hupffens nicht ab.[80]
>
> [Character does not give up character. The cat does not give up its catching mice. Marcolfus demonstrated that character is stronger than all habituation. The crow cannot stop hopping.]

Together with King Solomon, Marcolphus is one of the protagonists of a well-known medieval story: that of the ugly and deceitful peasant Marcolphus who is confronted with King Solomon. The Middle Dutch representative of this narrative tradition is *Dat Dyalogus of Twisprake tusschen den wisen coninck Salomon ende Marcolphus* [The Dialogue or Conversation between the wise King Solomon and Marcolphus], which was published by Henrick Eckert van Homberch in Antwerp in 1501 (see figure 10).[81] In the first part of this book, Solomon and Marcolphus discuss a number of sayings. The second part has a series of thirteen anecdotes, in

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[76] Mark MEADOW, "On the Structure of Knowledge in Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs*", in: *Volkskundig Bulleti*n, XVIII, 2 (July 1992), p. 150.

[77] STOETT 1981 (as cited in note 74), p. 229 (nr. 1100), explains 'nature is stronger than nurture' as: 'inborn inclinations are always stronger than whatever instruction and admonition' (my translation). TER LAAN 1984 (as cited in note 74), p. 233, writes: 'even though a person has learned a hundred times that something is not good, if he is tempted, he will do it anyway' (my translation).

[78] JENTE (ed.) 1947 (as cited in note 69), pp. 86 (nr. 542) / 244.

[79] See KLOEKE (ed.) 1959 (as cited in note 71), pp. VII-X, and MEADOW 1992 (as cited in note 76), pp. 156-158. In his book, Kloeke provided a parallel edition of Agricola's texts which correspond to Warnersen's proverbs. For this, he used an edition from 1534: *Sybenhundert und fünfftzig teütscher Sprichwörter* (Hagenaw, Secerius, 1534).

[80] KLOEKE (ed.) 1959 (as cited in note 71), p. 10* (Ag 131-132).

[81] See DEBAENE 1977 (as cited in note 61), pp. 263-264, and Willem DE VREESE and Jan DE VRIES (eds.), *Dat Dyalogus of Twisprake tusschen den wisen Coninck Salomon ende Marcolphus, naar den Antwerpschen druk van Henrick Eckert van Homberch in het jaar 1501 uitgegeven*, Volksboeken opnieuw uitgegeven vanwege de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden – VII, Leiden, 1941. On the international popularity of this book around 1500, see IBIDEM, p. 40. An overview of the medieval Solomon/Marcolphus tradition in IBIDEM, pp. 50-72, and Elisabeth FRENZEL, *Stoffe der Weltliteratur – Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtliche Längsschnitte*, Stuttgart, 1988 (7), pp. 665-667.

which Marcolphus continually shows himself to be smarter than Solomon. Agricola's *Marcolphus beweisete* [Marcolphus demonstrated] undoubtedly refers to the sixth anecdote.

Frontispiece of *Dat dyalogus of twisprake tusschen den wisen coninck Salomon ende Marcolphus* (Antwerp, Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1501).

Marcolphus wants to prove to Solomon that *aert of nature gaet voer leere* [character or nature is stronger than nurture]. In his palace, King Solomon has trained a cat to hold a burning candle between its paws during evening meals in order to provide the king with light. Marcolphus then hides three mice up his sleeve, which he releases the one after the other. When the first two mice are released, the king manages to keep the cat seated, but with the third mouse it can no longer control itself: the cat drops the candle and runs after the mouse.

> Marcolf liet doe wtlopen die derde ende als die catte die sach en conste sy haer niet langher onthouden sy werp die kaerse daer henen ende spranc na die muys ende greepse Doe Marcolf dat sach seyde hi den coninck Here nu heb ic voer u gheproeft ende bewesen dat nature gaet boven leere.[82]
>
> [Marcolphus then released the third mouse, and when the cat saw it, it could no longer control itself. It threw the candle away, chased the mouse, and caught it. When Marcolphus saw this, he told the king: 'My lord, I have now proven and demonstrated to you that nature is stronger than nurture'.]

[82] DE VREESE and DE VRIES (eds.) 1941 (as cited in note 81), pp. 23-24.

From the above, it can be concluded that the natural inclination of cats toward catching mice was proverbial in the late Middle Ages (*what comes from cats, wants to catch mice*), and that this phenomenon was associated with the proverb *nature is stronger than nurture*: the inability to control innate inclinations and vices was considered foolish and ill-advised. This shows that in late medieval culture, cats were often associated with folly and unwise behaviour.[83]

2.4.2 Muyst wel ende mauwet niet

Middle Dutch collections of proverbs have yet another proverb based on the cat's being partial to catching mice. In the *Proverbia Communia* (1480), we can read: *Muyst wel ende mauwet niet* [catch mice and do not miaow], accompanied by the Latin version *prendite feruenter mures abs voce latenter* [catch mice with zeal, but without sound].[84] The *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden* edition (1550) has: *Muyset / ende maeuwet niet* [catch mice and do not miaow], preceded by *weest stille ende duyr* [be quiet and prevail] and followed by *roepet niet luyde* [do not shout in a loud voice].[85] The proverb *catch mice but do not miaow* (today we would call this a 'saying') was also used outside the Low Countries, particularly in German-speaking regions.[86]

The precise meaning of this proverb can be derived from a poem in the so-called *Van Hulthem manuscript* (circa 1410) entitled: *Van Mauwene: dat es een edel poent* [About miaowing: which is a noble topic].[87] This poem has five stanzas, each of them ending in *muset wel maer en mauwet niet* [catch mice but do not miaow]. The first two stanzas explain that a person who wants to gain the praise of women and of people in general should stay far away from *mauwene* [miaowing]. The third stanza points out that loyalty and endurance are *ghefondeert op helen* [based on keeping mum], but loyalty is now dead, and disloyalty has spread its nets everywhere, *ende si geet met mauwene spelen* [and it is playing with miaowing]. The fourth and fifth stanza explain the final line of the five stanzas in detail:

> Wildi met gemake sijn,
> Soe swijghet, siet ende hoert.
> Van alder quaetheit es venijn
> Mauwen, want daer meneghe moert
> Af es comen ende groet discoort.
> Nv verstaet die woerde mijn,
> Ic sal v raden: nv verhoert
> Welc dat meest die baten sijn.
> Wel helen, verstaet den sin.
> Noch soe singic altoes mijn liet:
> Muset wel maer en mauwet niet.
>
> Reinder dinc en wert nie vonden,
> In desen werelt op desen dach,

[83] Dirk BAX, *Ontcijfering van Jeroen Bosch*, 's-Gravenhage, 1949, p. 175, refers to a number of textual and visual sources from the 13th up to the 17th century which show that in the Low Countries the cat could be a symbol of folly, among other things.
[84] JENTE (ed.), 1947 (as cited in note 69), p. 84 (nr. 517).
[85] KLOEKE (ed.) 1959 (as cited in note 71), p. 71 (lines 30-32).
[86] Compare JENTE (ed.) 1947 (as cited in note 69), p. 239 (nr. 517).
[87] The text was published in Herman BRINKMAN and Janny SCHENKEL (eds.), *Het handschrift-Van Hulthem – Hs. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 15.589-623*, Hilversum, 1999, volume I, pp. 593-594 (nr. 127).

Dan enen suueren mont in allen stonden,
Want ons die bible doet gewach:
Houdt uwen mont altoes gebonden,
Dat hi geen quaet spreken en mach.
Soe saeltu ten lesten worden vonden
Los ende vri van allen sonden.
Hier met indic nv mijn liet:
Muset wel maer en mauwet niet.[88]

[If you want to feel at ease, keep silent, watch, and listen. Miaowing is the venom of all evil, for it has caused many murders and big quarrels. Now understand what I say, I will give you advice, now hear what is most profitable: to conceal well, understand its meaning. Meanwhile, I keep singing my song: catch mice but do not miaow.

In this world today, not a cleaner thing was ever found than a pure mouth on every occasion, for the Bible tells us: always keep your mouth under control, lest it speak evil. Then you will eventually find yourself exempt and free of all sins. This is how I end my song: catch mice and do not miaow.]

It is clear that in these lines 'to miaow' means: to speak, to be a chatterbox, to speak evil, to be unable to conceal (*helen*) certain things because you are talking about them.[89] However, the poem does not explicitly explain the meaning of the verb *musen*. According to Hogenelst *musen* literally means: to chase mice, to stalk mice, and also: to eat well, to feast. According to her, *musen* in the Hulthem poem refers to the secret pleasures of love.[90] In my opinion, this interpretation is not wrong but incomplete. Kiliaan's Dutch-Latin dictionary *Etymologicum Teutonicae Linguae* (1599), explains *musen* as: *Mures capere, captare, venari, tacitè quaerere: insidiari muribus. Metaphoricè, Abdita magno silentio inquirere* [to catch mice, to capture, to chase, to seek out in silence, to stalk mice. In the figurative sense: to look for what is hidden in great silence].[91] 'To look for what is hidden' seems to be the meaning of *musen* in the *Van mauwene* poem. The meaning of the *muset wel maer en mauwet niet* proverb could then be paraphrased as follows: activities that may give rise to slander and envy are better conducted in secret and not discussed in public. That these activities relate to love affairs in *Van Mauwene*, as Hogenelst argued, is only correct regarding the first stanza. In the following stanzas, *mauwen* is more broadly applied to 'doing things in secret' and to 'letting things pass' in general. The last stanza relates this advice (confront the world around you with circumspection and reservation) to the Bible, which also recommends to hold your tongue and to refrain from gossip.

We meet the same warning of indiscretion, boasting, and slander, connected to both the Bible and the *muyst wel ende mauwet niet* motif, in the Middle Dutch version of *Das Narren Schyff*. The 19th chapter of *Der Sotten Schip oft dat Narren Schip* (1548) criticizes fools who cannot control their tongue. The chapter begins with two Biblical citations (Proverbs 10, 19 and 13, 3), which point out the dangers of foolish talk. We then read:

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[88] BRINKMAN and SCHENKEL (eds.) 1999 (see previous note), p. 594 (nr. 127), lines 34-35. I have added modern punctuation to this passage.
[89] Compare J. VERDAM, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 's-Gravenhage, 1981, p. 350. Here, *mauwen* is explained as: to miaow, to whine, to be a chatterbox, to speak evil.
[90] Dini HOGENELST, "Sproken in de stad: horen, zien en zwijgen", in: Herman PLEIJ et al., *Op belofte van profijt – Stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de Middeleeuwen*, Nederlandse Literatuur en Cultuur in de Middeleeuwen – IV, Amsterdam, 1991, p. 179.
[91] ANONYMOUS (ed.), *C. Kiliaan: Etymologicum Teutonicae Linguae*, Handzame, 1974 (facsimile of the 1599 edition), p. 328.

> Ende om dies wille dat die mensche wtwendelic geen edelder werc en can dan spreken ende gheen beter dan wel spreken so heeft ons natuere twee doren ghegheuen en die altijts open ende mer een tonghe ende die met twee sloten dat is metten lippen ende tanden besloten om dat wi bereyt souden zijn in hooren ende traech in spreken want mids qualic spreken menich man bedorven is. Ghelijc die exter schaterende haer ionghen wroecht ende die muys om dat si sonder gheruchte niet gheten en can haer seluen verraet. Conste de catte muysen sonder mauwen ende die sot winnen sonder hem beroemen si souden beyde haer proye behouwen.[92]
>
> [And because outward man knows no nobler work than to speak and no better work than to speak well, nature has given us two doors, which are always open, and only one tongue, which has two locks, namely the lips and the teeth, so that we will always be prepared to listen, but slow to speak, for many persons have been corrupted because of speaking evil. Just as the laughing magpie gives away its young and the mouse betrays itself, because it cannot eat without making noise. If the cat could catch mice without miaowing and the fool could win without boasting, both would keep their prey.]

Here, the magpie which betrays its nest because of its 'laughter', the mouse which makes noise when it is eating, and the cat which miaows when it is chasing mice are used as metaphors for the fool who cannot keep silent and gets into trouble because of his big mouth.

The proverb under discussion here can also be found in the poem *Mont toe, borse toe* [Mouth shut, purse shut] by the Antwerp *rederijker* Cornelis Crul (XVIA). The theme of the poem (published in an Antwerp edition of 1583) is that everyone should be aware of betrayal, cunning, and deceit everywhere and at all times. It concludes with these two lines: *Hoort, swijcht, end siet: / Muyst, maer en meaut niet* [Listen, keep silent, and watch: catch mice, but do not miaow].[93]

We can conclude from all this that the late medieval proverb *catch mice and no not miaow* warned of foolish, ill-advised behaviour, particularly of the inability to keep silent about things that were better left in secret. This proverbial exhortation to 'listen, look, and keep silent' in social intercourse was a well-known characteristic of late medieval bourgeois mentality, as is shown by many other examples of it in late medieval urban literature and iconography. Recent research has pointed out that the late medieval burgher, out of an ever-vigilant concern for scandal and loss of honour, is encouraged to show circumspection, reserve, and distrust when dealing with the world around him.[94]

2.4.3 The mouse-catching cat as an erotic metaphor

The proverb *muyst wel ende mauwet niet* [catch mice and not not miaow], advising to keep silent in matters that should remain hidden, also appears in late medieval profane literature in

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[92] GEERAEDTS (ed.) 1981 (as cited in note 53), sig. g1v-g2r.

[93] C. KRUYSKAMP (ed.), *Heynken de Luyere en andere gedichten*, Klassieke Galerij – 48, Antwerp, 1950, p. 54.

[94] Paul VANDENBROECK, *Jheronimus Bosch – Tussen volksleven en stadscultuur*, Berchem, 1987, pp. 100-104; Paul VANDENBROECK, "Stadscultuur in de Nederlanden, ca. 1400 – ca. 1600: ideologische zwaartepunten, evenwichtsmechanismen, dubbelbinding", in: *Gemeentekrediet,* XLIV (1990), nr. 2, pp. 24-25; HOGENELST 1991 (as cited in note 91), pp. 166-183. These authors also pointed out that the role of mistrust in social intercourse was already propagated before the 15th century, and this in both the highest and the lowest ranks of society (nobility / peasants). Apparently, the late medieval bourgeois culture has adopted and adapted an idea from the cultures of court and country, as was also the case in other instances. See, among others, Herman PLEIJ, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511 – Literatuur en stadscultuur tussen middeleeuwen en moderne tijd*, Amsterdam-Louvain, 1988, pp. 331 sqq.

an erotic context. One example of this is the first stanza of the poem *Van Mauwene* [About Miaowing] (see the previous section), which argues that *wie van vrouwen hebben sal prijs* [who wants to score with women], must watch his words and refrain from *mauwene, want daer geen goet af en compt* [miaowing, for this leads to nothing good]. Here, the verb *musen* in the final line *muset wel maer en mauwet niet* [catch mice but do not miaow] undoubtedly means: to have a secret love affair, as was suggested by Hogenelst.[95]

This erotic connotation is even more obvious in four poems from the *Refereinenbundel van Jan van Stijevoort* [Jan van Stijevoort's Collection of *Rederijker* Poems], a manuscript dating from 1524. In the first of these poems, a monologue by a married man entitled *Esse sulc soe esse soe ses* [Is she like that, then she is what she is], a cuckold complains about the unfaithfulness of his wife.[96] What she wants, is *in vreemde broixkens weijden* [to graze in other meadows] and *tblou huijxken omhanghen* [to clothe (him) with the blue hooded cloak, i.e. to cheat on him], but like a true hen-pecked husband he accepts the situation, and at the end of each stanza he laconically repeats the line *esse sulc soe esse soes es* [is she like that, then she is what she is]. In the first three lines of the third stanza he asks himself and the reader three rhetorical questions: *Can sij dan thoiresoonken luijsen / mint sij meer myn gelt dan mijn lyf / can sy wel sonder mauwen muijsen* [can she delouse the whoreson, does she love my money more than my body, can she catch mice without miaowing].[97] Here, *sonder mauwen muijsen* [to catch mice without miaowing] means: to have a secret sexual relationship.

A second poem from the same textual source is entitled *isse sulc soe isse soos es* [is she like that, then she is what she is] and is a variant of the previous poem.[98] The line *can sy wel sonder mauwen muijsen* [can she catch mice without miaowing] has disappeared, and now we read in the third stanza (lines 28-29):

> Loopt ze vast na tallen huijsen
> Can sy nae dubbele ghesellekes muijsen?
>
> [Does she frequently visit inns? Can she chase mice / licentious merrymakers?]

Line 29 cannot be translated literally into English (unless you would turn 'to mouse' into a transitive verb), but *dubbele ghesellekes* (literally: 'double mates') means something like 'licentious merrymakers', and *muijsen* means that the wife is flirting with and trying to seduce these *ghesellekes* (which is a diminutive and thus adds to the frivolity of the situation).

The third *Stijevoort* poem belongs to the so-called 'amorous' genre and is entitled *what ghi hoort of siet muijst mer en mauwet niet* [whatever you may hear or see, catch mice but do not

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[95] I have already pointed out above that Hogenelst limits the proverb in this poem to its erotic meaning. Dirk COIGNEAU, *Refreinen in het zotte bij de Rederijkers*, volume II, Ghent, 1982, p. 351 (note 254), interprets the proverb as: 'to do something on the sly, to enjoy something in secret'. This definition likewise takes too little account of all the proverb's connotations (see, for example, the 'speak no ill of others' aspect).

[96] Frederik LYNA and Willem VAN EEGHEM (eds.), *Jan van Stijevoorts Refereinenbundel anno MDXXIV, naar het Berlijnsch handschrift integraal en diplomatisch uitgegeven*, volume I, Antwerp, 1929, pp. 64-65 (nr. 32). On this poem, see COIGNEAU 1982 (see previous note), pp. 350-351.

[97] COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), p. 351, interprets *thoiresoonken luijsen* [to delouse the whoreson] as referring to the wife's sexual activity or as 'to deceive the husband'. In my opinion, this line refers to the adulterous wife who is nursing a natural child.

[98] Frederik LYNA and Willem VAN EEGHEM (eds.), *Jan van Stijevoorts Refereinenbundel anno MDXXIV, naar het Berlijnsch handschrift integraal en diplomatisch uitgegeven*, volume II, Antwerp, 1930, pp. 167-168 (nr. 215). On this poem, see Dirk COIGNEAU, *Refreinen in het zotte bij de Rederijkers*, volume I, Ghent, 1980, pp. 53-54 (nr. 48), and COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), pp. 352-353.

miaow].[99] The author advises young lovers to be aware of *nyders tonghen* [the tongue of envious people]. Everyone should keep silent when love affairs are at stake, *tsy van v seluen oft anderen* [whether they are yours or others']. The third stanza (lines 23-33) explains the meaning of the title:

> Ghy jonghers die tsamen loopt ghemene
> om venus mutsken al sonder sparen
> Syt huechs van monde vertrect redenen ghene
> daer namael of comen mocht enich beswaren
> Horende weest dorende al sonder verclaren
> als Ouidius dat bescryft in syn vermonden
> Al ghebuert v ijet of yemant van uwen charen
> weest secreet in allen stonden
> Men vinter die somtyts gheluc hadden vonden
> mer duer haer gesellen vermonden syn comen int verdriet
> dus wat ghi hoort of siet muijst mer en mauwet niet.
>
> [You young people who are eagerly looking for love (literally: Venus's little cap), watch your mouth, say nothing that later may get you into trouble. When you hear something, play ignorant and do not react, just as Ovid said and described. When something happens to you or to one of your beloved, always keep silent. We know of some that had found happiness, but because their friends told about it, they ended in sorrow. So, whatever you hear or see, catch mice but do not miaow.]

The last line clearly refers to love affairs and admonishes not to talk about them to others.

A variant of *muijst mer en mauwet niet* [catch mice but do not miaow] with the same meaning can also be found in a fourth *Stijevoort* poem. *Sijdij sulck soe sijdj soe ghij sijt* [when you are like that, you are what you are] is a monologue of a married woman.[100] An apparently lustful wife complains about her husband's poor performance in bed. She is not made of stone, and that is why her husband has to accept that she is looking for satisfaction elsewhere. Lines 25-26 (the first two lines of the third stanza) read: *Tsyn goey catgens die musen sonder mouwen / Wanneert mij ioeckt soe doe ict mij crouwen* [It are good cats that catch mice without miaowing / When I feel an itch I make someone scratch it]. Here, the cats which can catch mice without miaowing refer to lascivious wives and their secret, adulterous behaviour.

In three of these four *rederijker* poems, the verb *muizen* [to mouse, to catch mice] refers to the adulterous behaviour of a lustful wife. She is the cat, and the men which she desires are the mice. Only in the last of the poems discussed above (*wat ghi hoort of siet muijst mer en mauwet niet*) can the activity of 'mousing' be pursued by men and women, and are both men and women compared to a cat. The same ambiguity can be found in the second book of Dirc Potter's *Der Minnen Loep* [The Ways of Love] (1411-1412), a Middle Dutch rhymed treatise on love. The subject of this second book is *goede minne* [good love] and its four phases. During the first phase the two partners meet each other in the company of others. The male walks passed the female's house, and when he sees her, he is very happy. She should then nod at him in a friendly manner, so that he lies awake at night, thinking of her:

> Hier op zo zijn zij wael ghemoet

[99] LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.) 1930 (see previous note), pp. 91-92 (nr. 177).
[100] LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.) 1930 (as cited in note 98), pp. 168-170 (nr. 216). On this poem, see also COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), pp. 352-353.

Ende hopen twart noch alle goet.
Sijn zij in kercken of in cluusen,
Die cat siet altoos na den musen.
Dus draghen zij die lieve min
In horen eersten aenbeghin.[101]

[Then they are in a good mood and hope that everything is going to turn out well. Whether in churches or in hermitages (sic), the cat is always on the lookout for mice. Thus they carry sweet love with them at the very outset.]

Here, *die cat siet altoos na den musen* [the cat is always on the lookout for mice], a variant of the proverb *what comes from cats wants to catch mice*, means that boys by their very nature are interested in girls and vice versa: they spy upon each other with the intention of finding a suitable partner. In this passage, the cat can refer to either the boy or the girl, and the same holds true for the mouse. However, it is obvious that the mouse-hunting cat is used as an erotic metaphor (in the broadest sense of the word 'erotic': everything that relates to the mutual contacts between the two sexes).

The *hunting cat* motif is already used as a metaphor for adulterous wives in *Die Rose* (circa 1300), a Middle Dutch version of the 13th-century rhymed allegorical text *Le Roman de la Rose*.[102] Here, the motif is once again linked to the *nature is stronger than nurture* idea. In a long monologue, an old procuress argues that married women are entitled to extra-marital relations. Just as a cat's nature is inclined toward catching mice or rats, a woman's nature is inclined toward freedom, and binding herself to one partner does not agree with this:

Hier bi terechte Venus soude
Onsculdich sijn, want si woude
Hanteren ende doen hare vrihede,
Ende oec alle vrouwen mede,
Die hare vriheit willen plien,
Al brekense huwelic mettien.
Want die Nature doetse wecken,
Diese ter vriheit wart wil trecken.
Lieve kint, die name ene catte,
Die noit ne sach mues no ratte,
Ende nauwe van musen ware gehoedt,
Ende verweindeleke ware gevoedt,
Ende worde si ere mues geware,
Dat si liepe neven hare,
Si soudse sonder twijfel vaen
Ende al hare gerechten laten staen.
Men mochte met en genen saken
Tusschen hem beiden den pays maken.[103]

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[101] P. LEENDERTZ WZ. (ed.), *Der Minnen Loep, door Dirc Potter*, Leiden, 1845-1847, volume I, pp. 151-153 (Book II, lines 766-818). The citation: lines 813-818.

[102] On the dating of *Die Rose*, see D.E. VAN DER POEL, *De Vlaamse Rose en Die Rose van Heinric – Onderzoekingen over twee Middelnederlandse bewerkingen van de Roman de la Rose*, Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen – XIII, Hilversum, 1989, pp. 19-20.

[103] Eelco VERWIJS (ed.), *Die Rose van Heinric van Aken, met de fragmenten der tweede vertaling*, Utrechtse herdrukken – XI, Utrecht, 1976 (reprint of the 1868 edition), p. 217 (lines 12.831-12.848). For the French original, see Daniel POIRION (ed.), *Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun – Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris, 1974, pp. 382-383 (lines 14.031-14.052). In a similar context and also with a reference to the *nature is stronger than nurture* idea, the 'mouse-catching cat' motif also appears in *The Manciple's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer (XIVd). See Larry

> [This is why Venus should be judged 'not guilty', because she wanted to follow and act out her free will, and the same applies to all women who want to act according to their free will, even though they break the marital bond in doing so. For Nature influences them and pushes them toward freedom. Dear child, if you took a cat which never saw a mouse or a rat, and which did not pay attention to mice, and which was not used to eating mice, if that cat became aware of a mouse running next to her, it would undoubtedly catch it and ignore all other food. It would be impossible to make peace between these two.]

The textual examples discussed in this section show that the'mouse-catching cat' motif could function as an erotic metaphor, in which the cat commonly refers to women and the mice to men. The passage from *Die Rose* also points out that within this erotic imagery the 'mouse' element can be substituted by a rat, but even then the rat still refers to the man.

In this context, we should also mention the curious scene that was represented in snow right in front of the Brussels palace of Count Henry III of Nassau during a festival of snowmen in January 1511. Next to a fool, people could see a wild cat that was licking its arse and held a large rat in its paw. We know about these snow figures thanks to a rhymed report on the Brussels festival by the city poet Jan Smeken, which was published by Thomas van der Noot in 1511:

> Voer 'thof van Nassouwen, avont ende morghen,
> Stont een sot, en daer lach een wilde catte.
> Si lecte haren eers, al sou se verworghen.
> In haren poot had se een groot ratte.[104]

> [In front of the Nassau Palace stood a fool by day and by night, and there was a wild cat. It licked its arse, as if it wanted to strangle itself. In its paw, it held a large rat.]

Because the cat was licking its arse and a fool was standing nearby, the snow figure of the cat should probably be interpreted in a negative way, perhaps as a reference to improper sexual behaviour. What makes this snow figure even more special, is that Bosch experts consider Henry III of Nassau the potential patron of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych, and we know for sure that he was an early owner of the painting (which was located in Henry's Brussels palace from at least 1517 on).[105] Pleij has suggested that the snow figure described by Smeken alluded to Henry's loose life (in the erotic and culinary field). An interesting idea, particularly in the context of the erotic visual puns that can be found in the *Garden*'s central panel, but unfortunately impossible to prove with any certainty.[106]

2.4.4 The cat as a metaphor for women

The erotic dimension of the *mouse-catching cat* motif is further confirmed by a number of late medieval textual sources, in which the cat metaphorically refers to women in general, and to licentious women in particular. In the Middle Dutch *Die Rose* [The Rose], women's nature is compared to the cat's nature in the monologue of the character 'Ami'. The comparison is not flattering at all. Ami argues that a man who hits his wife in order to make her love him, is not wise:

D. BENSON et al. (eds.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, Oxford, 1987, p. 284 (Fragment IX, Group II, lines 160-162 / 175-182).

[104] Pleij 1988 (as cited in note 94), p. 360 (lines 105-108).

[105] MARIJNISSEN 1987 (as cited in note 1), p. 98 (note 129); VANDENBROECK 1990 (as cited in note 1), p. 163.

[106] PLEIJ 1988 (as cited in note 94), pp. 297-300.

Want wie sijn wijf te slane begint,
Om meer van hare te sijn gemint,
Slacht den genen die sine catte
Sleet ende roepse weder na datte,
Om te bendenne ende te vane.
Aldus betert een wijf van slane:
Want mach die catte hem ontspringen
Sine coemt weder meer int thingen.
Hi salse laten comen ende gaen
Na haren wille, dats wel ghedaen.[107]

[For the man who begins to hit his wife in order to gain her love, is like the man who hits his cat and calls for her afterwards to catch and bind her. This is how hitting improves a wife: for if the cat can escape the man, it will never come back when called. He should let her come and go according to her own will, then he acts wisely.]

In other words, cats or women should not be forced into a straightjacket, because they are so self-complacent and priggish that they always want to have it their own way. We find a similar passage in the so-called *Tweede Rose* [Second Rose] or *Vlaamse Rose* [Flemish Rose] (circa 1290), another (less faithful) Middle Dutch adaptation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Here, the man who rebukes his wife is compared to a *woman* who hits her cat, which obviously produces a rather clumsy imagery.[108]

Some two hundred lines after the passage from *Die Rose* quoted above, Ami once more compares women's conceit to the nature of a cat, but this time he refers to the cat's inclination toward catching mice and rats:

Men mach dat wijf castien niet,
Maer laten gewerden wies si pliet.
Gelijc die katte, die bi naturen
Can die siencie alle uren
Ratten ende musen te vane,
Sonder leren en tscole te gane,
Aldus can twijf hare jugement,
Dat si bi naturen vent.
Wat si werct ende wat si doet,
Dat dinct hare algader wesen goet,
Ende si es niet so menichvoldech,
Dat sine doet dinc, sine esse sculdich
Te doene bi naturen wale.
Daeromme verliest hise altemale,
Diese castijt ende wilt blameren
Van dingen die si wilt anteren.[109]

[107] VERWIJS (ed.) 1976 (as cited in note 103), p. 157 (lines 9137-9146). For the French original, see POIRION (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 103), pp. 276-277 (lines 9733-9742).
[108] K. HEEROMA (ed.), *De fragmenten van de Tweede Rose*, Zwolse drukken en herdrukken voor de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden – 33, Zwolle, 1958, p. 142 (lines 571-580). On the dating and naming of this version, see VAN DER POEL 1989 (as cited in note 102), pp. 15 / 18.
[109] VERWIJS (ed.) 1976 (as cited in note 103), p. 161 (lines 9357-9372). For the French original, see POIRION (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 103), p. 282 (lines 9963-9986).

[A man should not chastise his wife, but let her do what she wants. Just as the cat who by nature knows how to catch rats and mice without learning or going to school, a wife's nature tells her how to behave. Whatever she works out or does, it all seems good to her. And she is not labile, she only does things because nature makes her do them. That is why he who chastises her and wants to rebuke her because of the things she does, will lose her altogether.]

These two passages apply a woman's self-complacency to the relationship between husband and wife. Also noteworthy: whereas the Middle Dutch text explicitly mentions the hunting of mice and rats, the original French only has the verb *surgeüre* (to pounce on).[110] It comes as no surprise that the cat is associated with women's self-complacency in a thirteenth-century literary source, for contemporary Latin *artes* texts tell the story of the cat that is so pleased with its own reflection that it falls into the water and drowns. We find this story in the 22nd book of Albertus Magnus's *De animalibus* (13th century) and in the 4th book of Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* (13th century). According to Thomas, this strange behaviour is mainly applicable to female cats.[111]

In the late Middle Ages, women were not only associated with cats because of their respective self-love, but also on account of the fact that they are both partial to pursuing their own profit. A 14th-century example of this can be found in a Middle Dutch fabliau, which satirizes men and women who think wealth is more important in love affairs than a good disposition and sincere feelings. This moral is expressed in the first 21 lines, after which the actual narrative begins. It deals with two knights (one good but poor, the other rich but miserly) who are in love with the same lady. The lady prefers the latter knight because of his money:

Dese minde die vrouwe mede[112]
Ende plach der seluer sede
Die dic vrouwen hebben gheploghen
(… missing line…)
Di doer den penninc heeren goken
Ende segghen datmen mitten loken
Wel den duuel eten mach.
Daer na soe comt die leyde dach
Dat hi moet mit ander sausen verleyden:
Men wil node vanden penninc sceiden.
Dicke valt dat mer na droemt
Ende dat die nide die siel verdoemt.
Dat is ghedaen der vrouwen sin:
Rechte meer no min
Volghen si der catten natueren.[113]

[The woman loved this (knight) as well, and she showed the same behaviour which other women have often shown (…), who deceive men because of their money and say that one can eat the devil with garlic. But later comes the sad day that he (the devil) has to be digested with a different

[110] This is the case in line 9361 of manuscript A. Manuscript C only has *muse* [mouse] in line 9191. See VERWIJS (ed.) 1976 (as cited in note 103), p. 161.
[111] James J. SCANLAN (ed.), *Albert the Great: Man and the Beasts – De animalibus (Books 22-26)*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies – XLVII, Binghamton, 1987, p. 162 (Book XXII, Tract. 2, chapter 1, section 121); H. BOESE (ed.), *Thomas Cantimprensis: Liber de natura rerum – Editio princeps secundum codices manuscriptos*, volume I: Text, Berlin-New York, 1973, p. 152 (Book IV, section 76, lines 21-27).
[112] In this line, *die vrouwe* is the subject.
[113] C. KRUYSKAMP (ed.), *De Middelnederlandse boerden*, The Hague, 1957, pp. 84-95 (the citation: p. 86, lines 71-85).

sauce. He (the rich man) hates to spend his money. Often, she dreams about it and envy corrupts the soul. This is how women like to behave. They truly follow the nature of the cat.]

These lines suggest that women often choose a partner on account of his money, even though he has a devilish character. Such women, behaving like cats, will be doomed in the Hereafter. The cat-like behaviour of women is not explicitly explained in the text, but can be associated with the cat's proverbial trait of being friendly toward people from whom they can benefit. Middle Dutch proverbs expressing this popular wisdom are *om die minne vanden smeere / lect die catte den candeleere* [because she loves the candle-grease, the cat licks the candle-stick] and *de catte weet wel wat baert dat sij lackt* [the cat knows very well whose beard it should lick].[114]

The first five lines of the fabliau seem to refer to this latter proverb:

Sint dat wi vrouwen garen
Dat wy smeken en smaren
Ende licken omtrent den baert,
Dat vaert gaerne hinderwaert,
Op dat wy in die burse syn dul.

[Although women like us to beg and flatter and to lick the beard, this is gladly dispensed with, when our purse is empty.]

If (as is suggested by the editor of the text) we change *wi* [we] in the first line into *di* (the) and pay attention to the context, these lines seem to mean that women like to be courted by men, unless these men are poor. It would then be men who, like cats, *licken omtrent den baert* [lick the beard], and not women. This interpretation is not problematic, as the proverb to which the text refers is applicable to both men and women.

This can be illustrated by means of a passage from the first part of the Antwerp *Salomon ende Marcolphus* edition (1501):

Salomon: Als die mogende den crancken verwinnet so neemt hi hem af al dat hijs heeft.
Marcol: Die catte syet wel wiens muyl si licken sal.[115]

[Solomon: When the strong one beats the weak one, he takes away everything he owns. / Marcolphus: The cat knows very well whose mouth it should lick.]

In the first part of this book, Marcolphus's rejoinders to Solomon's proverbial sayings are meant to belittle and mock Solomon's wisdom. In the above lines, Solomon's insight that one should beware of the mighty and more powerful is neutralized by Marcolphus's use of a proverb which means that these same mighty people can be taken in by flattery, and thus the cat's pursuit of self-interest metaphorically refers to both men and women.

The Antwerp edition has two more dialogues in which the cat refers to women:

Salomon: Een vrouw die haer Gods ontsiet die sal werden gepresen.

[114] JENTE (ed.) 1947 (as cited in note 69), p. 88 (nr. 560); KLOEKE (ed.) 1962 (as cited in note 70), p. 32 (nr. 546).
[115] DE VREESE and DE VRIES (eds.) 1941 (as cited in note 81), p. 9.

> Marcolf: Een catte die eenen schone pels heeft die salmen villen.[116]
>
> [Solomon: A woman who respects God will be praised. / Marcolphus: A cat which has a nice fur will be skinned.]

Marcolphus's belittling reply undoubtedly means that a pretty woman (a cat with a nice fur) always runs the risk of arousing the desire of men.[117] In this passage, the role of the woman can be considered neutral and innocent, but this is certainly not the case in yet another passage, where the cat's untrustworthiness is explicitly associated with a woman's untrustworthiness:

> Salomon: Een vrouwe sterck in doechden wie sal die vinden.
> Marcolfus: Een catte soe ghetrouwe datmen hair dmelck bevelen mach wie sal die vinden.
> Salomon: Nyemant.
> Marcolfus: Soe salt oock qualicken sulcken wijf.[118]
>
> [Solomon: Who will find a woman that excels in virtue? / Marcolphus: Who will find a cat which is so loyal that the milk can be entrusted to it? / Solomon: Nobody. / Marcolphus: Likewise, it will be difficult to find such a wife.]

The passages discussed in this section show that in late medieval literature the cat could be used as a metaphor for women, the *tertium comparationis* being some vice or other, in particular self-complacency and untrustworthiness. The following section will deal with a number of textual sources where the cat refers to the lasciviousness of women.

2.4.5 The cat as a metaphor for lascivious women

The lascivious nature of female cats was already known to Aristotle, who wrote in his *Historia Animalium*: *Female cats are lasciviously inclined by nature, and seduce the males into sexual intercourse during the period in which they are in heat*.[119] The cat is also associated with female (and male) sexuality in medieval devotional literature, for example in the treatise *Des Coninx Summe* [The King's Summa] (15th century), the Middle Dutch translation of the French *Somme le Roi* (completed in 1279).[120] One of its chapters is about virgins, and here virginity is compared to a white skirt which can be stained by mud, blood, and fire (referring to wordly longings, desires of the flesh and words that tempt to sin). Regarding the latter, it is said:

> Die dan bewaren wil den rock der maechdelicheit, moet hem hoeden sulcke woerde te horen ofte spreken, dien senghen of verbernen moghen. Die macke katte senget haer dicke ende die wilde katte niet.[121]

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[116] IBIDEM, p. 5.

[117] In Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (XIVd), the Wife of Bath rebukes one of her ex-husbands, who compared her to a cat and pointed out that in order to keep a cat at home, its fur should be scorched, for if it has a nice fur, it cannot be controlled and will leave the house whenever it is in heat. See BENSON et al. (ed.) 1987 (as cited in note 103), p. 109 (Fragment III, Group D, lines 348-356).

[118] DE VREESE and DE VRIES (eds.) 1941 (as cited in note 81), pp. 5-6.

[119] For the Greek original, see A.I. PECK (ed.), *Aristotle – Historia Animalium – Vol. II (Books IV-VI)*, Loeb Classical Library – 438, Cambridge (Mass.)-London, 1984 (2), pp. 104-105 (Book V.II, section 540a, lines 11-13).

[120] Of the Middle Dutch version, ten manuscripts exist, two of which are dated (1437 and 1455). The text was printed in various editions (1478, 1481, 1504, 1519). See D.C. Tinbergen (ed.), *Des Coninx Summe*, Leiden, 1907, pp. 89-97.

[121] IBIDEM, p. 458 (sections 515-516).

> [The person who wants to preserve the skirt of virginity should take care not to hear or speak such words which may scorch or burn him. The tame cat is often scorched, and the wild cat is not.]

The last sentence was probably inspired by medieval *artes* texts, where it is said that cats like warm places and often lie so close to the fire that their fur is scorched.[122] From this, it can easily be understood why tame cats tend to burn themselves and wild cats do not: tame cats often lie close to the hearth indoors, whereas wild cats have no occasion to do this. The metaphor in *Des Coninx Summe* then suggests that women (and men) who have chosen to remain a virgin are more readily seduced to unchastity than women (and men) who lead a regular sexual life (within the married state).

The cat as a metaphor for lascivious women further appears in *rederijker* texts around 1500. The word *kamerkat* [literally: room cat] is a clear example of this. We can find it in poems of the Antwerp female author Anna Bijns (XVIA), in the plays *Mariken van Nieumegen* [Mary of Nimwegen] (circa 1500) and *De Spiegel der Minnen* [The Mirror of Love] (circa 1500), and in Kiliaan's Dutch-Latin dictionary (1599) as a metaphor for 'whore, concubine, mistress'.[123] *Rederijker* poems and plays offer more examples. At the end of the first act in *De Spiegel der Minnen*, the protagonists Dierick (a son of well-to-do burghers) and Katharina (a lower-class girl) have just declared their love for each other, when two *sinnekes* [approximative translations: little senses, little feelings, or little urges] begin to criticize and mock the young lovers, using a good deal of obscene language. *Sinnekes* are in fact allegorical characters in *rederijker* plays, who represent the vices, passions, and impulses of the other, 'regular' characters. In *De Spiegel der Minnen* the two sinnekes are called *Begheerte van Hoocheden* [Desire for Highness] and *Vreese voor Schande* [Fear of Scandal].[124] They comment on Dierick and Katharina as follows:

> Begheerte: Waer sidi broerken?
> Vreese: Ick hebbe legghen duycken.
> Begheerte: Tis nu al vetman.
> Vreese: Latet catken roncken.
> Begheerte: Sy hebben sint Joris vissop ghedroncken.[125]
>
> [(Desire:) Where are you, brotherkin? / (Vreese:) I have been hiding. / (Begheerte:) It is all fat and juicy now. / (Vreese:) Let the pussy pur. / (Begheerte:) They have been drinking St George's fish soup.]

The expression *latet catken roncken* [let the pussy (literally: little cat) pur], which appears in the same line as *tis nu al vetman* (which means something like: it is going well, everything is

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[122] See, for example, SCANLAN (ed.) 1987 (as cited in note 111), p. 163 (Book XXII, tractatus 2, chapter 1, section 121), and BOESE (ed.) 1973 (as cited in note 111), p. 151 (Book IV, chapter 76, lines 13-14). Jacob van Maerlant writes about cats: *Waerme stede minnen si so wel, / Dat hem dicke verbernet tfel* [they love warm places so much, that their fur often gets scorched]. See VERWIJS (ed.) 1980 (as cited in note 66), p. 127 (Book II, lines 2873-2874).

[123] W.L. VAN HELTEN (ed.), *Refereinen van Anna Bijns, naar de nalatenschap van Mr. A. Bogaers uitgegeven*, Rotterdam, 1875, p. 107 (Book II, nr. III, stanza f, line 6); W.J.A. JONCKBLOET (ed.), *Nieuwe Refereinen van Anna Bijns – Benevens enkele andere rederijkersgedichten uit de XVIe eeuw*, Ghent, 1886, p. 313 (nr. 86, stanza e, line 9); L. DEBAENE (ed.), *Marieken van Nieumegen*, The Hague, 1980 (5), p. 70 (line 565); M.W. IMMINK (ed.), *De Spiegel der Minnen door Colijn van Rijssele*, Utrechtse Bijdragen voor Letterkunde en Geschiedenis – VIII, Utrecht, 1913, p. 91 (line 2599); ANONYMOUS (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 91), p. 222 (sub *kamer-katte*).

[124] On the commenting role of the *sinnekes* in this drama, see W.M.H. HUMMELEN, *De sinnekens in het Rederijkersdrama*, Groningen, 1958, pp. 181-182 / 188-190, and J.E. VAN GIJSEN, *Liefde, kosmos en verbeelding – Mens- en wereldbeeld in Colijn van Rijsseles Spiegel der Minnen*, Groningen, 1989, pp. 82 / 93-94.

[125] IMMINK (ed.) 1913 (as cited in note 123), p. 36 (lines 1033-1035).

going according to our wishes), first refers to the foolish behaviour of the two lovers (a socially 'unequal' couple): the *sinnekes* are hoping for the downfall of Dierick and Katharina, and their being in love with each other is the first step on the path which will lead to their final ill fate (as will become clear in the further course of the drama). This is why the *sinnekes* can say that everything is going according to their wishes. We have already pointed out that in the late Middle Ages the cat could be a symbol of folly and stupidity.

However, there is more. The context in which the expression 'let the pussy pur' appears has a number of obscene allusions. This is clearly the case in the line *sy hebben sint Joris vissop ghedroncken*. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Middle Dutch 'they have drunk St George's fish soup' roughly meant: they are horny, sexually aroused.[126] Furthermore, line 1033 (*ick hebbe legghen duycken*) is ambiguous. Around 1500, *duycken* [literally: to dive] could mean 'to hide', but in *rederijker* texts it also appears in an erotic context, where it refers to sexual activities.[127] On account of the ambiguous context, it is highly probable that the expressions *tis nu al vetman* and *latet catken roncken* also conceal an erotic allusion. The latter expression would then refer to the (presumed) sexual arousal of Katharina.[128]

This interpretation is further confirmed by a passage in *Van Eneas en Dido* [About Eneas and Dido] (1552), a play by the Antwerp rederijker Cornelis van Ghistele. When Dido understands that Eneas, whom she loves, is going to leave her, she expresses her sorrow and frustration to Venus. At the end of her lamentation, the sinnekes *Faeme van Eeren* [Fame of Honour] and *Jonstich Herte* [Jolly Heart] step forward to mock her disappointment:

> Faeme van Eeren: Hoordt dat catken mauwen!
> Jonstich Herte: Hoordt dat minneken roncken![129]
>
> [(Fame of Honour:) Hear that little cat miaowing! / (Jolly Heart:) Hear that pussy pur!]

Once again, a lustful woman longing for a man is compared to a purring and miaowing cat, and at the same time an allusion is made to the foolish behaviour of lovers. At the outset of the play, Fame of Honour says to Jolly Heart:

> Wat belieft u, vrouwe?
> Willen wij tcatken laeten kijcken uijter mouwe
> Dwelck alte noode scuijldt int duijstere?[130]
>
> [What do you think, my lady? / Shall we make the little cat peep out from the sleeve? / It is grudgingly hiding in the dark.]

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[126] On this expression, see Herman PLEIJ (ed.), *De Blauwe Schuit*, Populaire Literatuur – I, Muiderberg, 1981 (2), p. 63.
[127] See, for example, LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.) 1929 (as cited in note 96), p. 95 (nr. 50, line 20): LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.) 1930 (as cited in note 98), p. 151 (nr. 206, line 45); Osc. VAN DEN DAELE and Fr. VAN VEERDEGHEM (eds.), *De Roode Roos – Zinnespelen en andere tooneelstukken der zestiende eeuw, voor het eerst naar het Hasseltsche handschrift uitgegeven*, Bergen, 1899, p. 107 (line 785).
[128] In the passage immediately following these lines, the *sinnekes* explicitly mock the (presumed) lustfulness of Katharina and in fact of all young women. See IMMINK (ed.) 1913 (as cited in note 123), pp. 36-37 (lines 1038-1043).
[129] K. IWEMA (ed.), "Cornelis van Ghistele – Van Eneas en Dido – Twee amoureuze spelen uit de zestiende eeuw", in: *Jaarboek De Fonteine*, XXXIII (1982-1983), pp. 214-215 (lines 1737-1738).
[130] IBIDEM, p. 163 (lines 270-272).

'To let the little cat peep out from the sleeve' was a Middle Dutch expression that meant: to commit a folly.[131]

Rederijker poetry likewise associates the cat with female lust. In *Om sottekens lachen die meyskens* wel [Little fools can make the girls laugh], a rather saucy poem from a collection written and compiled by the canon and *rederijker* Arnold Bierses (XVIB), the servant girls Lijsken and Golken bet with a young man that he cannot make them laugh.[132] The following night, the lad disguises as a *sot* (fool, jester), so that the girls won't recognize him. Because their boss is not at home and they are in need of a man, the girls decide to go to bed with the 'fool'. When the 'fool' ejaculates, they burst out in laughter, so the young man has won the bet: little fools can make the girls laugh. The first two lines of this poem read:

> Monckende catkens treckent tvlees uut den pot
> Ja, als sij het huys moeghen wachten alleine.[133]
>
> [Sneaky little cats pull the meat out of the pot / when they can guard the house alone.]

In the first line, apparently a variant of the proverb *luipende katten hebben het eerst het vleesch uit den pot* [prowling cats are the first to pull the meat out of the pot], the cats refer to the horny girls Lijsken and Golken, whose master is absent, so that they can seize the occasion and pull the 'meat' of their lover boy 'out of the pot'.[134]

Another example is offered by a poem from the *Refreinenbundel van Jan van Doesborch* [Jan van Doesborch's Collection of *Rederijker* Poems] (1528-1530), entitled *Van lachen en constic mi niet ghewachten* [I could not refrain from laughing].[135] With much malicious delight, the narrator observes how a *lobben* [shaggy dog] is getting drunk in an inn in the company of two *ionge simmen* [young monkeys] and an *oude katinne* [old she-cat]. The 'young monkeys' hug the 'dog', who thinks he is going to score and orders the best wine of the house. However, after some dancing the 'dog' falls into a drunken stupor and the 'old cat' steals his money:

> En doude katinnen (…)
> Sey: nv eest tijt dat ick veelen minne,
> Eest dat ick mijns selfs bedriuen kenne.
> Ick sal hier gaen togen mijnen aert
> En scrijuen sijnen bucht al in sonder penne
> En scoeyen van hier dan ongespaert.
>
> [And the old she-cat (…) said: it is now time to set my mind on a lot, if I know my own ways well. I am going to show my true nature and will write his bill without a pen, and then I will leave without wasting time.]

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[131] BAX 1949 (as cited in note 83), p. 175; COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), pp. 422 (note 450) / 435.
[132] On this manuscript, see COIGNEAU 1980 (as cited in note 98), pp. 96-103.
[133] Jules FRÈRE and Jan GESSLER (eds.), *Uit een Tongerschen dichtbundel der XVIe eeuw*, Tongeren, 1925, pp. 40-42 (nr. XIII). On this poem, see COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), pp. 265-266.
[134] P.J. HARREBOMÉE, *Spreekwoordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, Amsterdam, 1980 (reprint of the 1856-1870 edition), volume I, p. 388. In the 17th century, Father Poirters still advised parents to keep a close eye on their courting young daughters, because it *is meer als eens gezien dat de sluypende kattekens het vleesch uyt den pot stolen* [has been seen more than once that little cats on the prowl stole the meat from the pot]. For this citation, see E. DE JONGH, *Kwesties van betekenis – Thema en motief in de Nederlandse schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw*, Leiden, 1995, p. 76.
[135] C. KRUYSKAMP (ed.), *De Refreinenbundel van Jan van Doesborch*, 2 volumes, Leiden, 1940, pp. 262-264 (nr. 149). On this poem, see COIGNEAU 1982 (as cited in note 95), pp. 263-264.

When the 'dog' wakes up, his company has vanished, and he has to hand over his shirt to the innkeeper as a pledge. It is clear that in this comic poem the two young monkeys and the old cat refer to two young prostitutes and an old procuress. Here, the cat is not only associated with female sexuality, but also with deceit. This latter connotation of the cat will be examined in the following section.

2.4.6 The mouse-catching cat as a metaphor for falsehood and deceit

In Kiliaan's Dutch-Latin dictionary (1599), the word *katten-spel* [cat's game] is explained as follows: *Hostile and false game or joke: after the game, the cat devours the captured mouse*.[136] The cat's hostile and deceitful attitude toward the mouse was a topos in medieval *artes* texts. Thomas of Cantimpré (13th century) writes about the cat: *It is a dirty and hateful animal. It hunts for all sorts of mice. When the cat has caught one, it first exhausts its victim by playing with it, and afterwards it eats the deceived mouse*.[137] From this, it is easy to understand that a cat playing with a mouse could also be used as a metaphor of falsehood and deceit in literary sources, in both profane and religious contexts. An example of the former can be found in *Die Rose* [The Rose] (circa 1300), where the character Valsch Gelaet [Deceitful Appearance] compares his own deceitful behaviour with the behaviour of a cat that catches rats and mice:

> Want waer ic ga, mi es altoes met
> Baraet; ine soeke niet el dan datte.
> Gelijc niet el en soect die catte
> Dan die ratten ende musen
> Harentare ende achter huse.
> Aldus so jagic minen staet,
> Daer ic met decke mijn baraet.[138]
>
> [For wherever I go, I am always accompanied by deceit, I seek nothing else but that, just as the cat seeks nothing else but rats and mice everywhere and in the house. And thus I keep up my appearance, with which I cover my deceit.]

In his devotional treatise *Tafel van den Kersten Ghelove* [Summary of the Christian Faith] (1404), Dirc van Delf compares the cat's playing with mice to the capriciousness and untrustworthiness of the human imagination, one of the five 'inner senses':

> Die vierde is fantasia, dat is fantasie, properlic een wijsrasen. Dese sinne heeft hoor celle boven inden hoofde ende staet als dat ruwe bloemkijn opten appel of als een punt in een cirkel. Dese celle is seer ruum ende slecht ende daer in so valt veel wercs: op ende neder, hoghe ende laghe, ghins ende weder, verre ende na vermengelic die beelde op te halen ende weder wech te werpen: als een cat speelt mitter muus, also kiestse ende verwerptse mit veel ghedenckens.[139]

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[136] My translation. For the Latin original, see ANONYMOUS (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 91), p. 227.
[137] My translation. For the Latin original, see BOESE (ed.) 1973 (as cited in note 111), p. 151 (Book IV, chapter 76, lines 4-6). Jacob van Maerlant points out the same: see VERWIJS (ed.) 1980 (as cited in note 66), p. 126 (Book II, lines 2853-2858). The deceitful playing of cats with mice is also mentioned in the postincunabulum *Der Dieren Palleys* [The Palace of Animals] (1520). See the page from this printed edition which is reproduced in PLEIJ 1988 (as cited in note 94), p. 299.
[138] VERWIJS (ed.) 1976 (as cited in note 103), p. 179 (lines 10,392-10,398). For the French original, see POIRION (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 103), p. 308 (lines 11,065-11,070).
[139] DANIËLS (ed.) 1937 (as cited in note 14), pp. 45-46 (Winterstuc, chapter XI, lines 81-98).

> [The fourth (inner sense) is fantasia, that is imagination, in fact some sort of raving. This sense is located in the upper part of the head and stands like the rough blossom on the apple or like a dot in a circle. This location is very large and flat and a lot of unstable things are going on there, up and down, high and low, here and there, far and near, images are collected and thrown away again. Just as a cat plays with a mouse, this sense chooses and rejects these images with a lot of thinking.]

Another devotional treatise, *Des Coninx Summe* [The King's Summa] (15th century) offers a religious example by comparing the deceitful cat to the devil, whose temptations are aimed at making humankind sin:

> Ende die duvel speelt dicwijl mit dustanighen menschen, recht als die catte mitter muys die si ghevanghen heeft, want als si daer lanc ghenoech mede ghespeelt heeft, so eet sijse.[140]
>
> [And the devil often plays with such people, just as the cat does with the mouse which it has caught, for when it has played with it long enough, then it eats it.]

Around 1500, the motif had become a topical expression and could be applied to any form of human behaviour that was linked to falsehood or deceit. Within this topos, the mouse and the rat were mutually interchangeable. When Anna Bijns (XVIA) is complaining once more about the abuses of the world around her and rebukes her fellow-man's deceit and disloyalty, she writes:

> Tvolk speelt met malcanderen, gelijc de katte
> Speelt metter ratte; men siet trouwe verstijven.[141]
>
> [People play with each other just as the cat plays with the rat. Loyalty must be dying.]

In *Gesten van de guen (read: geuzen), daerinne begrepen huerlider claghen* [Deeds of the Protestant rebels, including their complaints] (1567), a poem from a manuscript of the Bruges citizen Willem Weydts and intended as Catholic propaganda against the Protestants, a remorseful Protestant iconoclast takes the floor. In the first stanza, he complains about the Catholic government's repression of the Protestant rebels. The Catholic lords are compared to cats, whereas the rebels are compared to mice:

> Nieuwers en cryghen wy eeneghe addresse
> de groote catten met ons als met de musen jocken.[142]
>
> [Nowhere do we find a listening ear, the big cats play with us as if we were mice.]

[140] TINBERGEN (ed.) 1907 (as cited in note 120), p. 418 (section 412).
[141] VAN HELTEN (ed.) 1875 (as cited in note 123), p. 39 (Book I, nr. XII, stanza a, lines 13-14).
[142] R. WILLEMYNS (ed.), "Een teruggevonden handschrift van de 16de-eeuwse Brugse kroniekschrijver en 'poëet' Willem Weydts", in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, 1969, p. 15 (nr. 4, stanza I, lines 9-10). *Groote katten* [big cats] refers to 'great lords, powerful and important people'. See ANONYMOUS (ed.) 1974 (as cited in note 91), p. 227 (*katte = vir praestans, vir insignis*).

2.5 Summary and preview

The material brought together in sections 2.3 and 2.4 above shows that the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif appeared in devotional texts and even more frequently in profane texts and images in the Low Countries around 1500. The mouse-catching cat was associated with folly, in particular with lack of self-control (the inabililty to repress natural inclinations and to keep silent about things better left secret), but also with female lust, falsehood, and deceit. The cat itself was associated with a number of female vices, in particular with arrogance, disobedience, self-love, self-seeking, untrustworthiness, lasciviousness, and folly. These connotations, which were current in the Low Countries (and elsewhere) around 1500, allow us to answer the question that was asked in section 2.2: what is the symbolic meaning of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in late medieval depictions of *The Fall of Adam and Eve*?

2.6 The meaning of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in *The Fall of Adam and Eve* iconography circa 1500

Can the late medieval connotations of the (mouse-catching) cat be related to the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in late medieval depictions of *The Fall of Adam and Eve*? Before this question can be answered affirmitively, it must first be demonstrated that in the late Middle Ages Eve (the motif primarily says something about *women*) was associated with folly, deceit, lust, and disobedience in a *Fall* context.

2.6.1 Eve's folly

In *Der Leken Spieghel* [The Layman's Mirror] (14th century), Jan van Boendale considers Adam *die wijste man, / die scoonste, die meeste, die ye lijf wan* [the wisest, the most handsome, the greatest man that was ever born].[143] Two centuries later, *Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen* [The Deceit of Women], a printed edition dating from circa 1532, still calls Adam *die wijste man (...) die oyt opter aerden quam, sonder alleen die sone Gods* [the wisest man that ever lived on earth, apart from the Son of God].[144] Whereas late medieval textual sources are unanimous in their praise of the first man's wisdom, the intellectual capacities of the first woman were described with far less enthusiasm. Jan van Boendale cannot conceal his disdain when he calls Eve a woman *die cume twe voir drie kinde* [who could hardly tell two from three]. The author of *Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen* is not so blunt when he points out that the devil first tried to tempt Eve, because women are *van brooscher natueren (...) / ende crancker om wederstaen* [of a more fragile nature and less good at resisting].[145]

The fact that the devil did not choose Adam but Eve as his first victim on account of the latter's weak and unsteady character was a topos in late medieval literature. For Boendale, Eve's credulity was a typical female characteristic, and according to the 15th-century *Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudenesse* [Mirror of Human Salvation] the devil spoke first to Eve, because he knew that she was less attentive and acted less wisely than her partner.[146] In the eyes of a late medieval (male) person, it was quite understandable that a woman of poor intellectual skills such as Eve could be seduced by the devil. However, that such a foolish lady was capable of

[143] DE VRIES (ed.) 1844-1848 (as cited in note 18), volume I, p. 91 (Book I, chapter 24, lines 29-30).
[144] BRAEKMAN (ed.) 1983 (as cited in note 20), sig. B1v.
[145] DE VRIES (ed.) 1844-1848 (as cited in note 18), volume I, p. 82 (Book I, chapter 22, line 52); BRAEKMAN (ed.) 1983 (as cited in note 20), sig. B1v.
[146] DE VRIES (ed.) 1844-1848 (as cited in note 18à, volime I, p. 81 (Book I, chapter 22, lines 11-19); DANIËLS (ed.) 1949 (as cited in note 32), p. 11 (chapter I, lines 69-74).

deceiving the wisest man in the history of humankind was far less understandable. But medieval people were aware of the fact that as a victim of female cunning Adam found himself in excellent company…

2.6.2 Eve's deceit

Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen [The Deceit of Woman] (circa 1532) offers the reader 23 stories from the past and from the present which are examples of female deceit, all (according to the title page) *tot een onderwijs en exempel van allen mannen ionck ende out, om dat si sullen weten, hoe bruesch, hoe valsch, hoe bedriechlijk dat die vrouwen zijn* [to teach and instruct all men young and old, because they should know how weak, how false, how deceitful women are]. The heading introducing the first of these stories reads: *Hoe onse eerste moeder Eua bedrooch den alderwijsten man Adam onsen eersten vader* [How our first mother Eve deceived the wisest of all men Adam, our first father]. After the anonymous author has explained how God created Adam and Eve, how the serpent deceived Eve, and how Eve deceived Adam, he concludes drily: *Aldus is die alder wijste ende schoonste man ter werelt bedroghen by zijn wijf* [And thus the wisest and most handsome man in the world was deceived by his wife].[147]

All the narratives dealing with female deceit from the past in *Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen* belong to the cycle of the so-called 'Wiles of women' (in Dutch: *Vrouwenlisten*). Parts of this cycle enter the visual arts at the end of the thirteenth century, but had appeared in textual sources much earlier. Around 1500, the theme reached a new, previously unknown popularity, thanks (or due?) to bourgeois morality, and dealt with love stories from the Bible or Antiquity in which wise or strong men are deceived or even plunged into misfortune by one or more women. The cunning of women, whose charms could make a man lose his head (sometimes literally), were exemplified in texts and images by couples such as Aristotle and Phyllis, Virgil and the daughter of Nero, Hercules and Omphale, Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, and Judith and Holofernes. Chronologically, the earliest example of such a couple were Adam and Eve.[148]

The following passage from *De Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudennesse* [The Mirror of Human Salvation] (circa 1410), in which the author adds his own indignant commentary to the Biblical story of the Fall, is exemplary of how a large number of late medieval texts view Eve's deceit as a warning of women's untrustworthiness and deceptiveness:

> Dus brocht zoe (Eve) den man tier stonde
> Teenen valle van zwaerre zonde
> Want zoene smeekende daertoe trac
> Dat hi met hare tgebod verbrac.
> Aleist dat inder bible niet
> En staet dus openbaer bediet,
> Nochtans es zeker dat zoe den man
> Met smekende woorden brocht daeran.
> O ghi mannen, hoort hier naer,
> Hier moghedi horen openbaer
> Dat groot sijn der wiven boosheden.
> Elc man wacht hem wel heden

[147] BRAEKMAN (ed.) 1983 (as cited in note 20), sig. B1r / B2r.

[148] On the *Wiles of women* theme, see Thea VIGNAU WILBERG-SCHUURMAN, *Hoofse minne en burgerlijke liefde in de prentkunst rond 1500*, Leiden, 1983, pp. 43-58; Petty BANGE et al. (eds.), *Tussen heks en heilige – Het vrouwbeeld op de drempel van de moderne tijd, 15de/16de eeuw*, [exh. cat.], Nijmegen, 1985, pp. 164-179; VANDENBROECK 1990 (as cited in note1), p. 97.

Vanden wiven die smekende sijn,
Want zij zijn argher dan venijn.
Die hem niet speghelen willen hier bi,
Met rechte werd bedroghen hi.[149]

[Eve thus caused her man to fall into heavy sin, for her imploring words convinced him to break the command toghether with her. Although the Bible does not mention it explicitly, it is sure that her imploring words made him do this. Oh you men, listen to this, here you can clearly learn that women's evil deeds are numerous. Today, every man should be aware of imploring women, because they are worse than venom. He who does not want to learn from this example, will deservedly be deceived.]

The author then refers to Samson, David, and Solomon, who were likewise deceived by women, and points out that the reader should mistrust *der wive conste* [women's tricks] even more, because he is not as wise, strong, or holy as these men were. Pleij has already noted that Adam was often described as a hen-pecked husband in Middle Dutch texts around 1500.[150] Therefore, it should come as no surprise when the author of *Vanden .X. Esels* [About Ten Donkeys], a printed edition dating from 1558 and dealing with ten kinds of 'donkeys' or fools, presents the hen-pecked husband as the second 'donkey' and advises him to change his sorry behaviour by reminding him of the task which Eve received from God after the Fall: submission and obedience to man.[151]

2.6.3 Eve's lust

In the recent past, Vignau Wilberg-Schuurman and Pigeaud have argued that late medieval urban culture around 1500 used the *Wiles of women* theme as a moralizing warning against adultery and that this was related to the typical bourgeois concern for the institution of marriage and the marital loyalty attached to it. Earlier, theology and courtly love had used the theme to oppose spiritual and carnal love, and pure and false love respectively, but around 1500 a new pair of opposites appeared: marital versus extramarital love.[152] This may be true for couples such as David and Bathsheba or Solomon and his wives, but does it also apply to Adam and Eve? Logically speaking, adultery or extramarital love was not an issue for Adam and Eve, because they were the only people on earth. Furthermore, a number of 16th-century *rederijker* poems use the *Wiles of women* theme (including Adam and Eve) to illustrate the relationship between a young man and his beloved and to show how love for a woman can cause a man to lose his head entirely.[153]

The crucial question then remains how the wise man Adam (the most intelligent man in history apart from Christ) could lose his head because of a foolish and deceitful woman such as Eve. Late medieval texts answer this question by pointing out that Adam knew perfectly well that it was not good to eat the apple, but that he did it anyway because of his love for Eve. In

[149] DANIËLS (ed.) 1949 (as cited in note 32), p. 13 (chapter I, lines 185-200).
[150] Herman PLEIJ, "Taakverdeling in het huwelijk – Over literatuur en sociale werkelijkheid in de late middeleeuwen", in: *Literatuur*, vol. III, nr. 2 (March-April 1986), pp. 70-72, and PLEIJ 1988 (as cited in note 94), pp. 262-266.
[151] A. VAN ELSLANDER (ed.), *Het volksboek Vanden .X. Esels*, Antwerp, 1946, p. 10 (lines 37-41).
[152] VIGNAU WILBERG-SCHUURMAN 1983 (as cited in note 148), pp. 47-50; BANGE et al. (eds.) 1985 (as cited in note 148), pp. 50-52 / 164; VANDENBROECK 1990 (as cited in note 1), p. 97.
[153] See, for example, E. SOENS (ed.), "Onuitgegeven gedichten van Anna Bijns", in: *Leuvensche Bijdragen*, IV (1900-1902), pp. 282-283 (nr. 22); LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.), 1929 (as cited in note 96), pp. 16-19 (nr. 5); KRUYSKAMP (ed.) 1940 (as cited in note 135), volume II, pp. 20-21 (nr. 7) / 106-110 (nr. 56).

his *Spiegel Historiael* [Mirror of History] (circa 1285), Maerlant summarizes this idea as follows:

> Adam selve wiste wel dat,
> Dat dat altoes niet en dochte
> Dat hi die godheit roven mochte.
> Maer dor die liefscap vanden wive
> At hi den appel keytive.[154]
>
> [Adam himself knew very well that it was not good to steal from God. But because of his love for his wife, he ate from the evil apple.]

Jan van Boendale and the author of *De Spieghel der Menscheliker Behoudenesse* likewise point out that Adam conceded to Eve on account of his *minne* (love) for her.[155] However, a number of texts suggest that this minne should not only be interpreted as the foolish state of being in love, but also as the concession to lust and sexual urges. In his *Rijmbijbel* [Rhymed Bible] (completed in 1272), Jacob van Maerlant describes how Adam and Eve began to feel ashamed in each other's presence immediately after the Fall on account of their nakedness and because *hare lust verroerde met desen / in die natuurlike lede* [at that moment their lust moved their genitals]. In a later chapter, he writes that Eve sinned in two ways and was therefore punished by God in two ways: due to her pride she was placed under man's authority, and because she had eaten *verbodene spize* [forbidden food] she would have to give birth to her children in pain. The latter implies that Eve was punished because of following her lust, showing herself unwilling to follow the divine command 'be fruitful and multiply'.[156] Dirc van Delf likewise interpreted the Fall, as far as Eve is concerned, as a deed of pride and lust, associating Eve and women in general with sensuality and pleasure.[157]

However, texts such as these only *imply* that the Fall should be viewed as an act of lust in the negative meaning of the term, and thus as an act of unchastity. By using the word *delectatio*, for example, Dirc van Delf seems to suggest that Eve took pleasure in sinning (regardless of the sin's nature), without explicitly pointing out that it was a sin of unchastity. The texts referred to above do not unambiguously state that the Fall should be interpeted as an act of unchastity. As Bax pointed out, Middle Dutch devotional texts associated the Fall with various or all cardinal sins (unchastity being one of these), but he was never able to find a Middle Dutch textual source dating from before 1500 in which the Fall is explicitly and solely interpreted as an act of unchastity.[158]

Around 1500, the situation has changed, in both textual and visual sources. A clear example of this is offered by the 13th chapter of the Middle Dutch version of *Das Narren Schyff*. It deals with *sotte, ongheorloefder minne* [foolish, improper love], which stands for uncontrolled lust, homosexuality, adultery, and sex with prostitutes. The uncontrolled lust of men (and of the women seducing them) is illustrated by a serious of famous names which belong the *Wiles of women* cycle:

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[154] DE VRIES and VERWIJS (eds.) 1982 (as cited in note 11), p. 19 (Part I, Book I, chapter 9, lines 24-28).
[155] DE VRIES (ed.) 1844-1848 (as cited in note 18), vol. I, p. 82 (Book I, chapter 22, lines 25-30); DANIËLS (ed.) 1949 (as cited in note 32), p. 12 (chapter I, lines 153-159).
[156] DAVID (ed.) 1858 (as cited in note 10), pp. 31 (chapter XIV, lines 648-654) / 165 (chapter XXIV, lines 118-127).
[157] DANIËLS (ed.) 1937 (as cited in note 14), pp. 163 (Winterstruc, chapter XXIV, lines 60-62) / 165 (Winterstuc, chapter XXIV, lines 118-127).
[158] BAX 1983 (as cited in note 2), pp. 58-60.

> Dalder volmaecte van gode ghemaeckt Adam was wt minnen vanden wijue verleyt / Loth die rechtuaerdighe / Sampson de stercke / Dauid de heylige coninc / Salomon die wijse / Aristoteles dalder geleerste / Hercules dalder stoutste / ende duysentich ander sijn bi vrouwen bedrogen Ende vrouwen sijn ooc met minnen door vloghen.[159]
>
> [Adam, the most perfect man created by God, was seduced due to his love of a woman. Loth the just one, Samson the strong one, David the holy king, Solomon the wise one, Aristotle the most learned one, Hercule the bravest one, and thousands of others have been deceived by women. And women are likewise under the spell of love.]

Passages such as this one show how the idea of *minne*, which before was used in the broad sense of 'erotic power and attraction' in a *Fall of Adam and Eve* context, is more and more limited to 'unbridled lust' and 'unchastity' around 1500.

This is further confirmed by a number of erotic *rederijker* poems which justify playful and frivolous sex by referring to Adam and Eve, who were the first to have enjoyed this. Regarding the command to procreate which Adam and Eve violated by giving in to their lust, the last stanza of the poem *Tspel waer goet en de tbaervoits kindeken* [The game would be fun, if there weren't the barefooted baby] is particularly relevant. In this poem, the narrator tries to convince a girl to have sexual intercourse with him, but she refuses because she fears an undesired pregnancy:

> Diet tbervoits kindeken eerstwerf vant
> Twas adam mit eua onder een groin lindeken
> Vanden naesmake en hadden sy gheen verstant
> Sy presen tspel inder waerheijt want
> Tspel waer goet en de tbaervoits kindeken.[160]
>
> [Those who were the first to find the barefooted baby were Adam and Eve underneath a green lime tree. They were not aware of the consequences. They really praised the game, for the game would be fun, if there weren't the barefooted baby.]

The last line can be paraphrased as follows: sex would be nice, if it did not lead to babies.

However, the most striking examples of the idea that the Fall was an act of unchastity, in which Eve played the role of seductress, can be found in the work of a number of German, Dutch, and Flemish artists around 1500 and in a Latin book printed in the early sixteenth century. Representations of the *Fall of Adam and Eve* by Albrecht Dürer, Hans Baldung Grien (see figure 11), Sebald Beham, Lucas Cranach, Lucas van Leyden, Jan Gossart, and others have a number of frank sexual allusions in which Eve's sensual, provocative behaviour catches the attention of the viewer.[161] That these allusions do not stem from modern *Hineininterpretierung*,

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[159] GEERAEDTS (ed.) 1981 (as cited in note 59), sig. e3v-e4v.

[160] LYNA and VAN EEGHEM (eds.), 1929 (as cited in note 96, p. 82 (nr. 42, lines 40-44). For similar passages in other *rederijker* poems, see KRUYSKAMP (ed.) 1940 (as cited in note 135), volume II, pp. 242-243 (nr. 129, lines 46-48) / 267 (nr. 151, lines 6-9).

[161] J.B. TRAPP, "The iconography of the fall of man", in: Constantinos A. PATRIDES, *Approaches to Paradise Lost – The York tercentenary lectures*, London, 1968, pp. 223-265; J.P. FILEDT KOK et al. (eds.), [exh. cat.], *Kunst vóór de beeldenstorm – Noordnederlandse kunst 1525-1580*, The Hague-Amsterdam, 1986, p. 149 (cat. nr. 36); Marlies CARON (ed.), [exh. cat.], *Helse en hemelse vrouwen – Schrikbeelden en voorbeelden van de vrouw in de christelijke cultuur*, Utrecht, 1988, p. 43; VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 35-36; H. Diane RUSSELL, [exh. cat.], *Eva / Ave – Women in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*, Washington-New York, 1990, pp. 112-129.

is confirmed by the German author Heinrich Cornelis Agrippa, who in his *De originali peccato* (already attested in 1518 and printed in Antwerp in 1529 and in Cologne in 1532) interpreted the Fall as a consequence of sexual desire and the serpent as the male sexual organ.[162]

Hans Baldung Grien, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, 1511, chiaroscuro woodcut, 37,7 x 25,7 cm, Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

[162] See RUSSELL 1990 (see previous note), p. 113.

2.6.4 Eve's disobedience

The idea that the Fall of Adam and Eve was caused by an act of lust and unchastity, seems to have been developed in the late Middle Ages, more particularly in the period around 1500. Before the sixteenth century, the Fall was traditionally interpreted as an act of pride and disobedience, mainly on Eve's part, whereas Adam knew where the violation of the divine command would lead, but on account of his love for Eve he conceded. According to this traditional view (whose most influential defenders were St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas), sexual lust was not the *cause* but one of the major *consequences* of the Fall: after the Fall, the sexual organs could no longer be controlled by the human will.[163]

Middle Dutch devotional texts from the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries likewise accuse Eve of *hoverde* [pride] and in particular of disobedience. That disobedience is related to pride, is quite understandable, for texts dealing with the cardinal sins and their 'daughters' invariably consider *inobedientia* or disobedience as one of the manifestations of *superbia* or pride.[164] In the sixteenth century, the Fall could likewise be interpreted as an act of disobedience on Eve's part, among other things. *Dat Bedroch der Vrouwen* [The Deceit of Women] (circa 1532) offers a good example. When God has forbidden Adam and Eve to eat from the tree in the middle of Eden, the devil is quick to react:

> Als dit verbot die heere hadde ghedaen / so practiseerde dat oude serpent die duyuel / hoe hy hem mochte ongehoorsaem maken.
>
> [When the Lord had prohibited this, the devil, the old serpent, wondered how he could make them disobedient.]

The devil then succeeds in making Eve eat from the apple, after which she gives it to Adam. The curious thing about this textual source is that in the end it still argues that Adam was innocent, which makes Eve the only disobedient one. After all, the author pleads, Adam received his wisdom directly from God, and therefore he knew that eventually Christ would come to earth and die in order to save mankind. Thus, the author suggests that Adam ate the apple not only to please his wife, but also to ensure that the history of salvation could take the course it had been planned to take from the very outset.[165]

2.6.5 Summary

On the basis of the material brought together in sections 2.6.1-2.6.4 above, the question of whether the connotations of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif derived from late medieval

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[163] Henry BETTENSON (transl.), *Augustine – Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Pelican Classics, Harmondsworth (Middlesex), 1981 (5), pp. 570-571 (Book XIV, chapters 11-12); Petrus CARAMELLO (ed.), *S. Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologiae*, volume II, Turin-Rome, 1948, pp. 765-768 (Pars secunda secundae, quaestio 163). See further BANGE 1988 (as cited in note 18), pp. 48-50: VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 2), pp. 32-34; RUSSELL 1990 (as cited in note 161), p. 113.

[164] DAVID (ed.) 1858 (as cited in note 10), p. 30 (chapter XIV, lines 636-637); DE VRIES (ed.) 1844-1848 (as cited in note 18), p. 86 (Book I, chapter 23, lines 59-62); DANIËLS (ed.) 1937 (as cited in note 32), p. 12 (Winterstuc, chapter I, lines 129-146); TINBERGEN (ed.), 1907 (as cited in note 120), pp. 238-239 (section 36). An overview of the treatment of *superbia* in Latin and Middle Dutch texts can be found in J.H. JACOBS (ed.), *Jan de Weert's Nieuwe Doctrinael of Spieghel van Sonden*, The Hague, 1915, pp. 62-66. See also Petronella BANGE, *Spiegels der christenen – Zelfreflectie en ideaalbeeld in laat-middeleeuwse moralistisch-didactische traktaten*, Nijmegen, 1986, p. 160.

[165] BRAEKMAN (ed.) 1983 (as cited in note 20), sig. B1v-B2r.

textual sources fit in with late medieval depictions of the *Fall of Adam and Eve* can now be answered affirmitively. Around 1500, texts and images show that Eve's behaviour, which caused the Fall, was associated with foolish lack of self-control, deceit, lust, and arrogant disobedience. In the same period, the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif was associated with female folly and lack of self-control, with female lust, and with female deceit. A cat as such could refer to female vices such as conceit, disobedience, self-love, self-seeking, untrustworthiness, deceit, and lust.

This leads to the following conclusion: when a mouse-hunting cat is depicted in the immediate surroundings of Adam and Eve in late medieval representations of the Fall, it is highly plausible that this detail symbolically refers to Adam and Eve. The cat then stands for Eve, the mouse for Adam. Just as the cat is naturally inclined to catch and kill mice, Eve (whose nature was inclined to folly, lust, deceit and disobedience) 'captured' Adam and plunged him into misery by seducing him to commit the sin of unchastity. This boiled down to a violation of the divine commandment 'be fruitful and multiply', which medieval sources interpreted as an obligation to control sexuality within the confines of matrimony, in the service of procreation. This further means that the proverbial expression *nature is stronger than nurture* (often associated with the mouse-catching cat in the Middle Ages) is perfectly applicable to Eve's behaviour which led to the Fall: she, too, preferred to follow her own will and to answer the call of her natural inclinations instead of obeying the instructions of God.

2.7 An iconographical interpretation of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych

The final goal of our cultural-historical analysis of the *cat catching a mouse (rat)* motif in late medieval textual and visual sources and particularly in representations of the *Fall of Adam and Eve* around 1500 was to find a reliable answer to the question: what can be the symbolic meaning of the cat with the rat-like mouse in its mouth in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych? My analysis allows for the conclusion that this latter detail probably has the same meaning as the *cat/mouse* motif in late medieval depictions of the *Fall of Adam and Eve*. This implies that the cat in Bosch's left interior panel may symbolically refer to the following things:

- Eve's folly and lack of self-control, allowing her 'nature' to prevail over divine 'nurture'.
- Eve's natural inclination toward lust and unchastity.
- Eve's deceitful nature, which caused her to seduce Adam and thus to rob Adam (and the whole of mankind) of paradisiacal happiness.
- Eve's arrogant disobedience, causing her to act as she saw fit and to lay aside God's commandment.

The captured mouse (or rat) would then refer to Adam, its manifest connotation being that of 'victim of Eve'.

This interpretation of the *cat/mouse (rat)* detail has a number of crucial consequences for the interpretation of the left interior panel and of the entire triptych. The cat with a mouse or rat in its mouth more than likely has a pejorative meaning: it refers to Eve's folly, deceit, lust, and disobedience, which caused Eve (herself a victim of diabolical deceit) to persuade Adam to trespass God's instructions together with her. What these instructions boiled down to, can be inferred from the group Adam-Christ-Eve, which is related to the left interior panel's central

theme, the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*, and implies that sexuality should be controlled by the human will, within the bonds of marriage and in the service of procreation (*be fruitful and multiply*).

The fact that the cat with the mouse (or rat) is placed in the immediate proximity of the left interior panel's central theme, makes it highly plausible that the first says something about the second. By using the *mouse-catching cat* motif, Bosch may have wanted to suggest that something was going (more correctly: was going to go) wrong with Adam and Eve's marriage. In other words: the cat with the mouse (rat) is forestalling the impending Fall, which Bosch (and many of his contemporaries) saw as an act of unchastity and deceit and as a consequence of the folly and arrogant disobedience of the first woman. As Tolnay and Baldass suggested (however, without providing strong arguments), Bosch's seemingly peaceful Earthly Paradise already contains the germs of Evil.[166] The left interior panel would then be linked to the other interior panels, but particularly to the central panel, by means of the detail in the central panel's lower right corner, where Adam (or the man behind him?) points an accusing finger at Eve: *she* caused the Fall, and that is why the men and women in the central panel indulge in the sin of *luxuria* (unchastity) and seem to disregard the divine commandment 'to be fruitful and multiply'. The right interior panel, then, shows how humanity is punished for this in Hell.

The interpretation of the cat and the mouse (rat) presented here perfectly agrees with Vandenbroeck's interpretation of the little owl in the opening of the Fountain of Paradise (placed in the exact centre of the left interior panel), although Vandenbroeck does not consider the cat with the mouse (rat) a negative detail (see section 1.5 above). Therefore, I cannot concur on Vandenbroeck's suggestion that the Fall concept does not play a role in the left interior panel, and that this panel only deals with the idea of marriage.[167] On the basis of my above analysis, I would rather argue that in the left interior panel the *Fall of Adam and Eve* and *Marriage of Adam and Eve* motifs are inextricably linked to one another. That this last argument could be made stronger by examining whether or not the other aggressive animals in the left interior panel have connotations similar to those of the owl and the cat, is a last, obvious conclusion, and at the same time a pointer in the direction of further research.

[166] Compare note 25.
[167] VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), pp. 36-38.

Appendix

THE CAT WITH A MOUSE (RAT) DETAIL IN THE LITERATURE ON BOSCH SINCE 2001

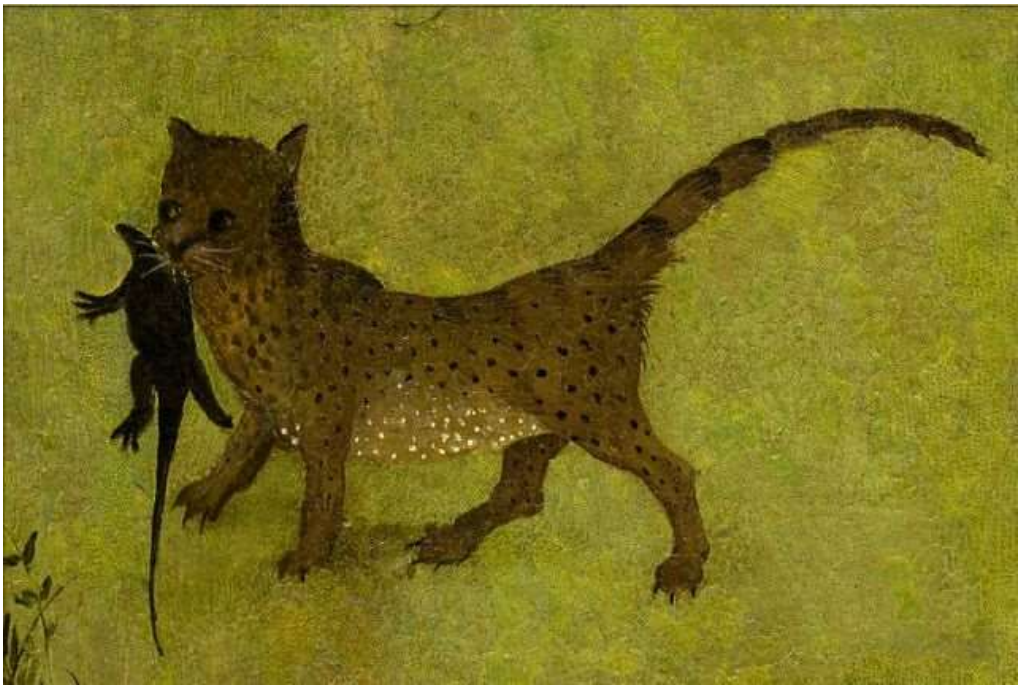

Figure 12
The cat and the mouse in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych (Madrid, Prado).

In *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome – Animal Symbolism in European Religious Art* [Washington D.C., 1980, p. 26], a book about animal symbolism in late medieval representations of St Jerome, Herbert Friedmann wrote:

> It must be admitted at the outset that it is always almost impossible to demonstrate beyond all doubt that the specific meaning of a given object (…) arrived at by the iconographer today actually was in the mind of the artist at the time when he created the work of art in which that very object was included. The most we can hope to do is to show what meanings were current for each of such subjects in the places where, and in the periods when, they were used by the artists, and to point out how closely or loosely they seem to fit the content of the work of art.

This is exactly what my essay, published in the Antwerp Royal Museum of Fine Arts' 2001 Annual (AA 2001 from now on) tried to do with the *cat and mouse* detail in Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych. Today, we call this method the *cultural-historical approach*. In 2001, this resulted in 50+ pages, the majority of which presented to the reader a (perhaps sometimes too elaborate) 'close reading' of *cat and mouse* passages in late medieval textual sources. After all, I am a philologist specialized in Middle Dutch language and literature, not an art historian. However, the main purport of the essay was to reach a better understanding of the *cat and mouse* detail in Bosch's *Garden* and of the triptych as a whole. In this respect, my text offered three basic insights, each of them concerning issues with which, in my opinion, every serious author writing about the iconography of Bosch's *Garden* should deal sooner or later. Obviously, this does not necessarily mean that all of these authors should agree with me…

- The Adam-Christ-Eve group represents the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* theme.
- The detail with the cat and the mouse symbolically refers to the *Fall of Adam and Eve* (in which Adam was the 'victim' of Eve, just as the mouse is the cat's victim). Although, in spite of all my arguments, this thesis may be debatable, the fact that Dürer and Clovio depicted a cat and a mouse in a *Fall of Adam and Eve* context cannot be denied.
- If the aggressive cat refers to the *Fall of Adam and Eve* and thus points out that something will be going wrong with the marriage of Adam and Eve, the same may be true for the other aggressive animals in the left interior panel. This would mean that Evil is already present in this panel (and in Eden before the Fall), and in turn this would suggest that what we see in the central panel is negative as well (and not positive as some authors have argued and argue).

What follows below, is an overview of what other authors have written about these three issues since 2001.

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BELTING [Hans Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch – Garden of Earthly Delights*, Munich-Berlin-London-New York, 2002, pp. 25-26] interprets the Adam-Christ-Eve group as a representation of the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*. There is no indication of the Fall of Man. However, the owl destroys the innocence of the scene, and the violence of some wild animals 'counsels us to regard the idyll with scepticism'. Belting does not mention the cat and the mouse.

DIXON [Laurinda Dixon, *Bosch*, London-New York, 2003, p. 236] sees the Adam-Christ-Eve group as 'the joining of Adam and Eve', which she associates with the 'chemical marriage'. Cat and mouse are not mentioned, neither are the aggressive animals.

That Belting and Dixon do not refer to AA 2001 is quite understandable, as the essay only became available in early 2003.

SILVER [Larry Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, New York-London, 2006, pp. 38 / 49 / 51] on the Adam-Christ-Eve group: 'In Bosch's rendition, the marriage ceremony has not yet taken place'. On the aggressive animals: 'Death already exists in Eden. One of the monstrous, dark birds above the monklike fish is swallowing a toad, while a **cat** below the dragon tree strides off with another **amphibian** in its mouth. In the right distance, a lion has slain a deer.' And: 'As Bosch's images of hermit saints reveal, garden and vegetal imagery could also be perverted, to be understood as the site of indulgent human folly, even sinfulness.' 'Christ's own presence unambiguously signals that this indeed must be Paradise, but an Eden already infected with the seeds of worldly corruption, where the dark colors of the amphibians and monsters as well as the presence of both the owl and of death signal "trouble in Paradise".' AA 2001 is mentioned in the bibliography.

According to VAN WAADENOIJEN [Jeanne van Waadenoijen, *De 'geheimtaal' van Jheronimus Bosch – Een interpretatie van zijn werk*, Hilversum, 2007, pp. 212 / 215] the Adam-Christ-Eve group refers to the *Creation of Eve*: 'God is standing next to Adam and holds Eve by the hand to give her in matrimony to Adam'. The frog-eating birds are called 'discomforting'. The **cat** with a **mouse** in its beak is associated with the 'very popular book of Bidpai', a medieval collection of fables from the East, in which a mouse does not listen to a cat's advice and ends up being eaten by the same cat. 'If the cat and the mouse were indeed

inspired by Bidpai, the moral of the story is clear: the first human couple will be seduced by the snake's fancy talk with disastrous consequences.' The *cat/mouse* detail can also refer to the devil and his victim, as is the case in *Somme le roi*. Footnote 486 refers to AA 2001.

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Figure 13
Misericord representing a cat with a mouse (or rat), early 14th century, Winchester Cathedral.

Van Waadenoijen's reference to the French *Somme le roi* is interesting. In 2001, my essay briefly referred to the same passage in the Middle Dutch translation of this text, *Des Coninx Summe* (15th century). See page 48 above. Back then, I did not go deeper into this symbolic meaning (a mouse-catching cat refers to the devil and his victims), because I knew of only one textual source referring to it. Today, I can give two further examples. In *Fabulae*, a collection of fables and parables written by the Anglo-Norman author Odo of Cheriton in the second quarter of the 13th century, the devil who corrupts the souls of sinners is twice compared to a cat which eats mice. In fable 26, a house mouse invites a field mouse to visit the house where it lives and enjoy the good food there, but the field mouse barely escapes from a cat, when it tries to eat from a morsel that fell from the table. The moral reads:

> Thus many men – hoping to make acquaintance with rulers of the churches, rulers who are undeserving and are simoniacs and usurers – eat their meals in the company of a danger just as great. For over the unjustly acquired morsel sits the Devil, the cat who devours souls.[168]

In fable 115, the sons of a house mouse always dash out from their hole when it is time to feed, but one day they are all devoured by a cat:

[168] John C. JACOBS (transl.), *The Fables of Odo of Cheriton – Translated and Edited with an Introduction*, Syracuse (New York), 1985, pp. 87-88 (nr. 26).

> Such are many men who do not want to obey either mother church or their parents or their masters. Instead, they prance boldly about. Thence the mouser – that is, the Devil – comes forth against them tempting them. And he devours them all, down to the last one, and casts them into Gehenna.[169]

The second textual source is a printed edition dating from 1597. In *Die Historie van Christoffel Wagenaer* [The History of Christoffel Wagenaer], the protagonist Christoffel Wagenaer, a disciple of Dr. Faustus, has concluded a pact with the devil Averhaen, so that he can learn black magic, acquire wealth, and be successful with women. When Wagenaer summons his devil once again, we read:

> Op den anderen dach riep hy synen Geest Averhaen, de welcke niet lange en vertoefde, maer quam terstont synen Heere te dienst, want hy wachte op hem, ghelijck die Catte op die Muys.[170]
>
> [The following day he called his Ghost Averhaen, who did not procrastinate, but quickly came to serve his Lord, for he waited for him, like a cat waits for the mouse.]

Eventually, these are only three textual sources referring to the diabolical version of the *mouse-catching cat* motif, but probably other similar passages can be found. Anyway, the three examples given above show that the mouse-catching cat as an image of the devil definitely existed in the late Middle Ages, and so this symbolism should not be ignored, when we try to interpret Bosch's cat and mouse. One of the obvious 'minuses' of my 2001 essay, was that it could not produce a medieval textual source in which the mouse-catching cat motif is clearly associated with the *Fall of Adam and Eve* theme, and I still cannot offer an example today. Because in his engraving of the *Fall*, Dürer placed the cat at Eve's feet, it seems logical to interpret this cat as referring to Eve and the mouse as referring to Adam. In the *Garden*, this visual hint is absent, and Bosch may very well have intended the cat as a reference to the wiles of the devil. As a matter of fact, the same goes for the representations of the *Fall* by both Dürer and Clovio. Is it possible that it was the intention of Bosch (and of Dürer, and of Clovio) to associate the mouse-catching cat with *both* allegorical meanings? After all, the poly-interpretability or *Mehrdeutigkeit* of medieval symbolism is often pointed out in the literature on Bosch, and it is confirmed by numerous passages in medieval primary texts. As Marijnissen noted in 1987: 'It is possible that a single image can represent different, even contradictory ideas'.[171] But whether the cat refers to the devil, to sinful Eve, or to both, the basic meaning of the motif in Bosch, Dürer, and Clovio is clearly negative.

An argument in favour of the diabolical interpretation of the *cat/mouse* motif could be that we know of a number of misericords in late medieval choirstalls which represent a mouse-catching cat. Figures 13 and 14 offer two English examples, but the motif also appears in continental churches and cathedrals. Being situated underneath the behind of the person leaning on them, these misericords often (not always) refer to evil and to bad examples. In these instances, Adam and Eve are nowhere around, so it seems very plausible that here we are dealing with the diabolical version of the *mouse-catching cat* motif. In this respect, it should not go unnoticed that the choirstalls of the Church of St Peter in Louvain (Belgium) have a misericord dating from circa 1440 which represents a cat with a phallus in its beak.[172]

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[169] IBIDEM, pp. 162-163 (nr. 115).

[170] Josef FRITZ (ed.), *Die Historie van Christoffel Wagenaer, discipel van D. Johannes Faustus – Naar den Utrechtsen druk van Reynder Wylicx uit het jaar 1597 uitgegeven*, Leiden, 1913, p. 61.

[171] MARIJNISSEN 1987 (as cited in note 1), p. 465.

[172] BAX 1948 (as cited in note 83), p. 13; VANDENBROECK 1989 (as cited in note 1), p. 45 (note 238).

Figure 14
Misericord representing a cat and a mouse (or rat), 15th century, Priory Church of St Mary and St Michael, Great Malvern.

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FISCHER [Stefan Fischer, *Malerei als Vision, Lehrbild und Kunstwerk*, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna, 2009, pp. 246 / 250] associates the Adam-Christ-Eve group with the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* theme, but in the Middle Ages this theme was seen as a prototype of the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*. A number of details in the left interior panel, i.a. the aggressive animals, refer to the *Fall of Adam and Eve*. This is particularly true for the **cat** with a **mouse** in its mouth and for the lion who is going to devour a deer. A footnote refers to AA 2001.

In 2013, FISCHER [Stefan Fischer, *Jheronimus Bosch – Das vollständige Werk*, Cologne, 2013, pp. 102 / 105], whose bibliography has AA 2001, still associates the Adam-Christ-Eve group with the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* theme. This time however, and opposed to what the author wrote four years earlier, the aggressive animals do not contradict the paradisiacal atmosphere, because medieval people thought that Eden was located somewhere in the East and was populated by exotic and monstrous animals, and also because Thomas Aquinas had written that the Fall had not changed the animals' nature. The *cat/mouse* detail is no longer mentioned.

Three years later, FISCHER's opinion [Stefan Fischer, *Im Irrgarten der Bilder – Die Welt des Hieronymus Bosch*, Stuttgart, 2016, pp. 111-112] has shifted again. He still associates the Adam-Christ-Eve group with the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* theme, but now the aggressive animals express a bestial nature and do not seem to agree with the divine Ordo, even though Thomas Aquinas had written that the animals in Eden behaved according to their true nature. This time, Fischer also mentions the cat/mouse detail: a **cat** has a **mouse-like animal** in its

mouth. The *cat catches a mouse* motif was a symbol of sinfulness, in particular of *luxuria*. The bibliography does not refer to AA 2001, and the book does not have any end- or footnotes.

FALKENBURG [Reindert Falkenburg, *The Land of Unlikeness – Hieronymus Bosch, The Garden of Earthly Delights*, s.l., 2011, pp. 124 / 127] sees a panther, not a cat. 'The **panther** carries a **rat-like creature** in its mouth, a sinister motif which exemplifies the subversive character of most, if not all, animal life in Bosch's Paradise. Instead of illustrating God's Book of Nature, as the bestiary tradition does, it manifests the impact of another (ghost) writer transforming the original script' (by this 'ghost writer', Falkenburg means the devil). AA 2001 is mentioned in footnote 190 on page 292, which informs the reader that 'the panther has also been labeled a "cat"'. The Adam-Christ-Eve group is referred to as a 'Creation scene'.

As KLEIN [Johanna Klein, *Jeroen Bosch – Hemel, hel*, Eindhoven, 2015, p. 125] wrote an adaptation of Falkenburg 2011 intended for a more general public, it is all the more surprising that she does call the cat a cat: 'The **cat** is walking with a **prey** in its mouth'. She sees this as 'absolutely unique' in an Edenic context. *Apparently, she is not aware of Dürer's and Clovio's cat and mouse, but AA 2001 is not in the bibliography*. Klein further interprets the cat and the other aggressive animals as 'disturbing'.

BÜTTNER [Nils Büttner, *Hieronymus Bosch*, München, 2012, p. 103] points out that according to St Augustine and other medieval theologians the Fall started at the moment when Adam turns away from God and toward Eve, and that this moment is expressed by the Adam-Christ-Eve group. The left interior panel has a number of details which refer to 'the presence of dark forces', such as the reptiles and 'the **cat** in the foreground, which has caught a **mouse**'. The bibliography does not have AA 2001.

CUTTLER [Charles D. Cuttler, *Hieronymus Bosch: Late Work*, London, 2012] interprets the Adam-Christ-Eve group as the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* [p. 139]. This detail is 'often incorrectly called the marriage of Adam and Eve' [p. 163]. 'This is not a marriage of Eve and Adam' [p. 166]. 'Nearby a **cat** makes off with its **prey**' [p. 156]. The details with aggressive animals show that 'the law of the world existed even before Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil' [p. 156]. It is mainly the rock in the form of a face which 'contributes to the panel's basic meaning, that is, the pre-existence of evil before the creation of Adam and Eve' [p. 157]. There is no reference to AA 2001.

DE VRIJ [Marc Rudolf de Vrij, *Jheronimus Bosch – An Exercise in Common Sense*, Hilversum, 2012, pp. 272-273 / 426] simply refers to the Adam-Christ-Eve group by means of the words 'their [Adam and Eve's] creation'. 'A cat is making off with its kill'. This scene, the aggressive animals, and other details point out that 'there is something seriously wrong with this version of *Paradise*'. Elsewhere he notes: 'A **cat** walks around with a **rat** in its beak, and in the distance a lion is devouring its prey, and a lizard-like creature is threatened by a massive boar. This all appears to suggest that evil was present in Paradise before Adam and Eve disobeyed Gods warning and brought sin into the World'. AA 2001 is mentioned in the bibliography.

According to ZUFFI [Stefano Zuffi, *Bosch – The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Milan, 2012, pp. 39 / 42] the Adam-Christ-Eve group focuses on the *Creation of Eve*. 'The serenity of the Earthly Paradise is not as real as it seems: Evil shows itself even here.' However, the aggressive animals (including the cat and the mouse) are not mentioned. There is no bibliography.

The BRCP team [Matthijs Ilsink, Jos Koldeweij, Ron Spronk, et al., *Hieronymus Bosch – Painter and Draughtsman – Catalogue Raisonné*, Brussels, 2016, pp. 362 / 366] interprets the Adam-Christ-Eve group as the *Presentation of Eve to Adam*. Bosch does not paint the Fall but only alludes to it (see the fruit-bearing tree with a snake coiled around it). The aggressive animals (including the cat) are not mentioned. The bibliography does not have AA 2001.

KOERNER [Joseph Leo Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel – From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life*, Princeton-Oxford, 2016, pp. 192 / 203] writes this about the Adam-Christ-Eve group: 'Some scholars identify the scene as the marriage of Adam and Eve'. According to this author, the scene refers to a moment between the *Presentation of Eve to Adam* and the *Marriage of Adam and Eve*: 'Bosch merges into one turning point the end of the beginning and the beginning of the end'. The 'improperly carnivorous nature of the beasts in Eden's foreground pool' suggests 'that before the Fall something about nature may already have been evil or corrupt'. The other aggressive animals, including the cat, are not mentioned. No reference to AA 2001.

SCHWARTZ [Gary Schwartz, *Jheronimus Bosch – The Road to Heaven and Hell*, New York-London, 2016, pp. 196-197] associates the Adam-Christ-Eve group with Genesis 1, 27-28. Because some animals are eating each other under the aegis of the Creator, 'we can only assume that it belongs to the natural order of things', and 'the beasts might depart from God's wishes by devouring each other, but Adam and Eve are uncorrupted masters of the universe'. The cat and the mouse are not mentioned. The bibliography does not have AA 2001.

SILVA MAROTO [Pilar Silva Maroto (ed.), *Bosch – The 5th Centenary Exhibition* (exhibition catalogue), Madrid, 2016, p. 336] on the Adam-Christ-Eve group: 'Bosch included the Creation of Eve on the left panel, but in a second phase he replaced it with God presenting Eve to Adam. This very uncommon subject was associated with the institution of marriage'. Bosch did not depict the Fall, but the anthropomorphic rock and the owl suggest evil. The cat and the other aggressive animals are not mentioned. The bibliography does not have AA 2001.

VANDENBROECK [Paul Vandenbroeck, *Utopia's Doom – The* Graal *as Paradise of Lust, the Sect of the Free Spirit and Jheronimus Bosch's so-called* Garden of Delights, Louvain-Paris-Bristol, 2017, p. 182] associates the Adam-Christ-Eve group with the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* theme. The *cat/mouse* detail is not mentioned, neither are the aggressive animals. AA 2001 is not in the bibliography.

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The reception of AA 2001

If we leave aside Benting and Dixon and consider the BRCP team one author, this overview boils down to 14 authors who could have reacted to AA 2001, but the least one can say is that the reception of AA 2001 has not been a big success. Only 5 authors refer to the essay in their bibliography or notes but without making much use of it. Perhaps this was partially due to the abominable (there really is no other word for it) English translation. The lack of response is particularly striking in the case of Dürer's and Clovio's cat and mouse, for this concerns primarily a matter of fact, not of interpretation: with Dürer and Clovio the cat and the mouse are clearly related to the Fall of Adam and Eve. In turn, this is a strong argument in favour of the thesis that Bosch's cat and mouse refer to the Fall as well, but then – admittedly – interpretation has already begun. Apart from not offering a text in which the *cat/mouse* motif is explicitly related to Adam and Eve (see above), a second 'minus' of AA 2001 is that it refers

to only two visual sources presenting the cat and the mouse in a Fall context. More examples are needed here, preferably dating from before or around 1500.

What is also remarkable, is that only 4 authors relate the Adam-Christ-Eve group to the *Marriage of Adam and Eve* theme, and that only 5 authors explicitly interpret the aggressive animals in the left interior panel as an indication that something is corrupt and evil in the Eden painted by Bosch, although these are views already put forward by other authors before AA 2001. Nevertheless, as pointed out earlier, I strongly believe that these observations are essential in order to reach a correct interpretation of the overall triptych.

Cat and mouse?

Figure 15
A cat has caught a mouse, woodcut illustrating the chapter about the mouse in *Hortus Sanitatis*, Mainz, Jacob Meydenbach, 1491.

Although 4 authors do not even *mention* the aggressive animals in the left interior panel (which is at least somewhat surprising), 7 out of 8 authors see the cat as a cat. Falkenburg is the only one to stick to the *panther* interpretation. Everyone knows that cats are used to eating rats and mice, but is this true for panthers as well? Then again, only 5 authors see the animal in the cat's beak as a mouse or a rat. In the book which she published in 2003, Laurinda Dixon does not mention the cat and the mouse, but in her dissertation (1980) she referred to a woodcut from the *Hortus Sanitatis*, a treatise combining information on plants, animals, birds, and their medical uses, which was printed several times in Latin and other languages in the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries.[173] The woodcut illustrates chapter 101 of the part on animals, which deals with the mouse, and in it 'Bosch's cat which grasps a rodent in its mouth is represented almost identically'. Dixons's illustration is taken from a 1490 Strasbourg edition, but figure 15 (see above) shows a very similar woodcut from the Latin edition which was published by Jacob Meydenbach in Mainz in 1491. As the reader can judge for himself/herself, this cat is not exactly 'almost identical' to Bosch's cat (the tail is different, the fur is not spotted), but there is indeed a certain likeness which further confirms that Bosch's mammal is a cat, and that its prey is a mouse (see the long tail). The *Hortus Sanitatis* was adapted in Middle Dutch as *Der Dieren Paleys*, published by Jan van Doesborch in Antwerp in 1520, but this edition does not have the woodcut with the cat and the mouse. Because in Dürer's engraving and in Clovio's miniature the cat is clearly watching a *mouse*, one is more readily inclined to likewise interpret the prey of Bosch's cat as a mouse, rather than as a rat.

Figure 16
Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, 1597, engraving published by Assendelft (Haarlem), 22,1 x 14,1 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. nr. RP-P-1887-A-12016.

[173] Laurinda S. DIXON, *Alchemical Imagery in Bosch's 'Garden of Delights' triptych*, Boston, 1980, p. 51 (ill. 31).

There is more circumstantial evidence supporting the *cat* interpretation. It should not remain unmentioned that in quite a number of Dutch paintings, prints, and drawings dating from around 1600 a cat functions as an 'attribute' of Eve in a *Fall* context (also compare note 52 above). However, in these cases the cat is not hunting for a mouse. I will give three clear examples, although many more can be found by those who are willing to look for them.

In an engraving produced by Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, dating from 1597, and representing *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, a cat is sitting at Eve's feet (see figure 16 above). Other animals in the foreground are a dog and a male goat.

Figure 17
Jan Saenredam after Abraham Bloemaert, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, circa 1600, engraving, 27,9 x 20,1 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. nr. 2012.136.602.

In another engraving (circa 1600) by Jan Saenredam, likewise representing *The Fall of Adam and Eve* but this time after Abraham Bloemaert (see figure 17 above), a cat and a turkey are sitting next to Eve.

Figure 18
Jacob Matham, *The Fall of Adam and Eve*, 1616, drawing, 16,6 x 11,5 cm, Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery, inv. nr. RSA 557.

Finally, a third example can be seen in a drawing by Jacob Matham, dated 1616 and representing *The Fall of Adam and Eve* (see figure 18 above). Here, a cat is sitting next to Eve together with what seems to be a hedgehog. These visual sources may be a century younger than Bosch's *Garden*, but they show that even then it was not unusual to relate a cat to Eve in a *Fall* context. Furthermore, the fact that these 'younger' cats are not catching mice, endorses the interpretation of Bosch's cat as a metaphor for Eve, rather than for the devil.

The lion devouring a deer

However, in some rare cases it is Bosch himself who offers the solution to iconographical issues. At the end of my 2001 essay, I suggested that it would be interesting to find out whether the other aggressive animals in the *Garden*'s left interior panel can likewise be associated with negative meanings. One of these aggressive animals is the lion which is devouring a deer in the upper right region of the panel (see figure 19 below).

Figure 19
A lion devouring a deer in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Garden of Delights* triptych (Madrid, Prado).

Figure 20
A lion devouring a deer in the left interior panel of Bosch's *Last Judgement* triptych (Vienna, Akademie).

A similar detail appears twice elsewhere in Bosch's oeuvre. A first time in the central region of the left interior panel of the *Last Judgement* triptych (Vienna, see figure 20 above). Here, there can hardly be any doubt about the negative connotation of the motif, as the detail is situated at the same height as the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*. And a second time it appears in the *Earthly Paradise* panel in Venice (see figure 21 below).

Figure 21
A lion devouring a deer in Bosch's *Earthly Paradise* panel (Venice, Gallerie dell' Accademia).

In Venice, we are dealing with Earthly Paradise *after* the Fall, which according to medieval belief functioned as a sort of waiting room for souls that were good but not yet good enough to

ascend to Heaven. In this Earthly Paradise, which was the final stage of Purgatory (the same idea can be found in Dante's *Divine Comedy*), the souls had to be cleansed from the last remains of sin. In this context, it is highly plausible that Bosch's lion in Venice refers to evil and to sin, just as the lion in the *Garden* and the lion in the Vienna *Last Judgement* do. The Earthly Paradise in its condition after the Fall as a waiting room before Heaven is another interesting theme in the art of Bosch (and of his followers). But to elaborate on this requires another time and another place.

[explicit 2nd April 2021 – Eric De Bruyn]